Adam F. Szczawinski
Nancy J. Turner

Edible Garden Weeds of Canada

Edible Wild Plants of Canada, No. 1

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Preface

Few plants are more familiar to Canadians than the dandelion, thistle, and clover. Yet, how many people realize that these common weeds and others that we regard as mere pests can provide sustenance in times of necessity or add a novel and gourmet touch to any meal? The purpose of this book is to acquaint gardeners, agriculturalists, city-dwellers, and wayside wanderers with the edible qualities of the plants that they encounter every day, not always under friendly circumstances.

We hope the book will be of use to scouts, outdoorsmen, and others concerned with survival, and that it will help to dispel the conservative attitude towards food held by many Canadians. Many of the plants discussed here are equal to any of our ordinary vegetables in taste and ease of preparation; the only mark against them is that people are not in the habit of using them.

We have described over forty species of weedy plants. Some are more palatable than others, and others are more common in a given locality, but almost anywhere in Canada a resourceful person using only the plants discussed in this book (supplemented with meat or other protein source) can produce a meal to delight the palate of any gourmet. For those who have gardens, many of the weeds that are laboriously pulled up and relegated to the compost heap can be used instead to supplement the vegetables that they compete with. For non-gardeners, the weeds growing in fields, vacant lots, abandoned orchards, and along roadsides, free for the taking (after obtaining permission, if privately owned), can go a long way in stretching the grocery budget. In many cases these weeds are fresher and more wholesome than the produce found in our markets.

The majority of the plants that we consider weeds originated in Europe and Asia, having been introduced to the North American continent in a variety of ways. Some, such as clover, watercress, orache, and salsify, were introduced intentionally, as agricultural crops or garden vegetables. Finding the North American climate highly suitable, they "escaped" from the confines of tended gardens and plowed fields, and gradually spread to suitable habitats around the countryside, while maintaining their footing in the places where they were first established. Others, including thistle, dandelion, wild lettuce, lamb's-quarters, and stork's-bill, were "tag-along" immigrants to our continent, imported in ships' ballast, in packing materials, with livestock, or as adulterants in crop seed and various foodstuffs. Some so-called weedy plants, such as milkweed, miner's-lettuce, Jerusalem artichoke, and evening-primrose, actually originated in North America and, though naturally wild, seem to thrive in and around human settlements, often growing in gardens, abandoned fields, and waste places. Jerusalem artichoke and evening-primrose were introduced to Europe and cultivated there for their edibility. Finally, in the case of such plants as stinging nettle

and broad-leaved plantain, the exact means and time of their arrival in the New World have been lost. We know only that they have a long association with humans, and seem to thrive in disturbed sites around settlements. Some weeds, such as dandelion and watercress, have successfully invaded the wilderness, far away from the centres of population. They were carried there by prospectors and trappers, and range and pack animals. Thus they are available as an emergency food source to pilots, hikers, and sportsmen, even in remote, untravelled territory.

Whatever their origins or means of arrival in North America, weedy plants have a fascinating history of human contact. Some were used by the ancient Greeks and Romans, others by the early Britons. Many were used as medicines by the herbalists of the Middle Ages, and a number were eaten during famines as recently as World War II. Some, such as wild lettuce, are considered to be direct ancestors of our garden vegetables. Others, including burdock and watercress, are themselves cultivated as vegetables in various parts of the world. We have included, where possible, information on the history of the plants described and their uses as materials and medicines, as well as the details of their culinary applications.

Of the recipes included, some are adaptations of widely known or traditional dishes for these plants or their relatives. Others have been devised from our own experience with the plants. These recipes are offered only as suggestions, to give the reader some idea of the potential of the plants as food. Imaginative chefs will not let these recipes limit their own inventiveness.

Editor's Note

The transition from the imperial system of weights and measures to the international metric system has prompted the use of both systems in this book. The recipes were originally developed under the imperial system, and have been converted to their closest metric equivalents based on the Canadian Metric Commission's guidelines. These "equivalents" are actually replacements, and sometimes involve slightly larger amounts than the original imperial measures. For example, the 8-ounce cup is actually equivalent to 225 ml, but the standard metric measure that replaces it holds 250 ml. As a result, the metric conversions of the recipes in this book sometimes yield slightly larger amounts than do the original recipes.

Introduction

What is a Weed?

The term *weed* is often freely (and mistakenly) applied to any herbaceous plant that is not actually cultivated. We even know some individuals who define a botanist as "a person who studies weeds". This rather general designation is not as far wrong as one might think, for the word *weed* is actually a corruption of the Anglo-Saxon *wiod*, used for all herbs or small plants. Over the centuries, however, the word has come to take on a more specific meaning, at least to botanists and agriculturalists.

A weed is any plant, usually fast-growing and aggressive, that establishes itself without the direct aid of man in gardens, fields, pastures, lawns, and other disturbed sites. These plants, like their zoological counterparts—rats, cockroaches, English sparrows, pigeons, and starlings—are particularly successful in coexisting with humans, and it is safe to say that most would not survive in their present form or numbers were it not for their human benefactors.

There is no one set of characteristics that applies universally and exclusively to weeds, but all are extremely well adapted for survival. Most are capable of growing in a wide range of climatic conditions and in a variety of soils. Annual and biennial weeds usually produce copious quantities of seed, a most effective method of perpetuating themselves. Perennial weeds also produce many seeds, but, in addition, most are capable of spreading vegetatively by creeping rootstocks or some other means. Many can regenerate new growth from the tiniest fragment of root or stem left in the ground and are thus almost impossible to eradicate. With these plants, cultivation only serves to spread root fragments over a wide area and to "create" twenty new plants from only one original. The perplexed gardener is left feeling like the sorcerer's apprentice—any action he takes to eliminate his weeds only seems to increase his troubles.

Many weeds can flower and produce viable seed under extremely adverse conditions—including drought and cold temperatures—that would kill or severely restrict the growth of other plants. In many cases, weed seeds can remain dormant in the soil for years, causing a continuing problem even after further seeding is prevented. Weed seeds can also be fairly resistant to heat, and succumb only to the most thorough composting and soil sterilization techniques. Some weed tops can even develop seeds when they are cut off from the roots at the time of flowering. Weed fruits and seeds are often equipped with specialized dispersal aids, such as the downy "parachutes" of dandelion, thistle, and milkweed, which are easily carried on the wind, or the clinging, hooked burs of bedstraw and burdock, which

attach themselves to animals and to people's clothing and are often transported many miles before being picked off and discarded.

Weeds can usually withstand a considerable amount of cutting or trampling. Many species growing in lawns have low-lying leaves that can effectively escape lawnmower blades. Other, taller weeds have remarkable regenerative abilities and can quickly grow new leaves and stems if these parts are damaged. Some weeds have evolved special protective mechanisms against insects and grazing animals. The prickly leaves of the thistles, sow-thistles, and some wild lettuces, for example, discourage many would-be browsers. The stinging hairs of the stinging nettle have a similar effect. Other plants are protected by the presence of distasteful chemical substances, such as the sharp, hot mustard-oils of the plants in the mustard family, including watercress, shepherd's purse, and peppergrass, or the bitter-flavoured stem latex of dandelion, sow-thistle, and others in the aster or composite family.

Fortunately, the presence of prickles, stinging hairs, or a sharp flavour does not eliminate a plant as a potential food for man. Spines and prickles can be removed by cutting or peeling, and the stinging hairs lose their effect in cooking. Many people enjoy a sharp or pungent flavour in their food, as long as it is not too concentrated; in any case, pungency can be reduced considerably by boiling the plant in one or more changes of water.

Weeds are represented in many different plant families. Even orchids and lilies can be weedy in some circumstances. Certain families, however, have evolved an unusually high number of weedy species that, as a group, are particularly successful at invading, or "pioneering", disturbed habitats. In North America the most notable weed families are the grass family (Poaceae or Gramineae), the knotweed family (Polygonaceae), the mustard family (Brassicaceae or Cruciferae), the pea family (Fabaceae or Leguminosae), and the aster, or composite, family (Asteraceae or Compositae). It is interesting to note that many of our important economic plants belong to these same families. The grass family, for example, contains such plants as sugar cane, bamboo, corn, rice, wheat, and many other cereal grains. The knotweed family includes buckwheat and rhubarb. Cabbage, broccoli, turnips, and radishes are all in the mustard family, and peas, beans, clover, and alfalfa belong to the pea family. The aster family contains many of our garden flowers—the various kinds of daisies, chrysanthemums, and dahlias—as well as the sunflower, Jerusalem artichoke, and

globe artichoke. Even if you do not appreciate the weeds in these families, you must admit that we would be hard-pressed to do without their relatives!

Many weedy plants originate from other regions of the world. Being tolerant in terms of growing conditions, they compete well with the native or indigenous species of an area, most of which have relatively specialized requirements for moisture, sunlight, temperature, and soil. The spread of weeds throughout the world is closely tied to the travels and activities of man. In North America, many weeds were initially established during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the continent was opening up to European settlement and when commerce between Europe and North America was developing rapidly. Once weeds are established in a locality, it usually takes very little time for them to become abundant and widespread. Today, many weeds are still in the process of extending their ranges into new territory. With the rapid settlement and development of northern Canada and the creation of many new, disturbed habitats there, we can expect to see a large number of weedy species that previously occurred mainly in southern Canada emigrating northwards to form a new component of the flora.

In general, man does not like his weedy companions. They invade his gardens and fields and choke out his crops, competing for sunlight, water, and nutrients. They sometimes harbour insects and disease organisms that attack garden plants. Their seeds contaminate wheat and other grain crops and must be cleaned out at considerable expense. Certain poisonous weeds can cause illness or death of livestock, and some strong-smelling or sharp-tasting species can taint the milk of the dairy cattle that eat them. Burs and barbed seeds stick to wool and hides and decrease their market value. In the summer, weeds can be a fire hazard, and many cause hay fever or produce dermatitis in susceptible persons. In Canada alone, it is estimated that a minimum of $200 million is lost annually as a direct result of weed damage and efforts to control weeds, not to mention the hundreds of lost hours and the aching backs and sore muscles of backyard gardeners across the country!

Fortunately, for all their disadvantages, weeds do have some redeeming features. Some, such as ox-eye daisy, milkweed, evening-primrose, and even the disreputable dandelion, are extremely attractive and can brighten up any landscape. Other weeds are valuable soil stabilizers in waste places and on agricultural lands, and can prevent erosion on road and railway embankments.

They provide food and shelter for many forms of wildlife, and some can be used as emergency forage for livestock. A number are useful as honey plants. Man has learned to utilize many of them as fibres and other materials, medicines, and—as you will learn in this book—foods.

Despite all our efforts to eradicate them, weeds will be with us for a long time to come. We may as well resign ourselves to that, and learn to appreciate their merits and use them to our advantage.

Watch Your Identifications!

Many weeds are both edible and palatable. Others may be bad-tasting, extremely tough, or too hairy or spiny to eat, but not actually harmful. However, a few weedy species can be dangerous to eat, as they are capable of causing illness or death to animals and humans. Those who attempt to utilize weeds as food should be aware of these poisonous species and should exercise extreme caution in selecting plants for the table. To avoid any possibility of a mishap, you should follow these few simple rules. Always be positive of your identifications. Do not rely entirely on illustrations unless you are sure there is no possibility of confusing a plant with a potentially poisonous one. Read the descriptions carefully and use only the parts of edible plants recommended in this book and other similar texts. After all, the fact that one part of a plant is edible is no assurance that the entire plant is harmless. Quite the opposite is true of rhubarb, potato, and tomato, all of which have poisonous greens. Follow the instructions regarding the peeling or cooking of plants before eating. Finally, we suggest that you eat only a small portion the first time you sample an edible weed; many foods that are quite acceptable to a majority of people can be disagreeable to others and can cause allergic reactions.

We have included at the end of this book a list of weeds to be avoided, either because they themselves are poisonous or because they closely resemble poisonous species. You may find that many of these dangerous species are growing in your own backyard, and though it may not be practical to eliminate them, it is a good idea to be aware of them, especially if you have small children around.

An additional warning: those wishing to gather edible weeds from roadsides, waste places, and agricultural lands should be very careful to choose areas that are not contaminated with fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides. Fortunately, in many areas, the practice of spraying rights-of-way with weed-killers has been discontinued in favour of mowing or cutting, but if there is any doubt at all as to the condition of the weeds, leave them strictly alone. Also, watercress and other moisture-loving weeds sometimes grow in water polluted by sewage or industrial wastes; be sure to check the drainage

patterns carefully when you want to harvest such plants. In an emergency situation, they can be sterilized by boiling them, or by immersing them in water to which a Halozone tablet (available in drugstores) or a few drops of chlorine bleach have been added.

Weeds as Food

Gathering weeds for food is not only fun and interesting. It can be valuable to you nutritionally and financially. Furthermore, in a time of emergency, weeds could actually make the difference between starvation and survival.

Euell Gibbons, the famous wild-foods enthusiast, includes in his book *Stalking the Healthful Herbs* a table that compares the nutritional values of wild foods, including such edible weeds as amaranth, chicory (greens), dandelion (greens), lamb's-quarters, purslane, watercress, and dock, with those of commonly used garden vegetables, like cabbage, celery, lettuce, onions, peppers, and spinach. The results? As a group, the weeds equalled, or in many cases surpassed, the vegetables in protein content, total carbohydrates, fibre, mineral content, and those vitamins that were analysed, namely vitamins A and C. A glance at the individual statistics is even more convincing. Lamb's-quarters, for example, contains more protein than any other green included in the list, and dandelion greens are the highest in total carbohydrates. Lamb's-quarters contains over three times more calcium than spinach and at least five or six times more calcium than most of the other vegetables in the list. Amaranth, dandelion greens, purslane, and watercress are also very high in calcium. Lamb's-quarters also has the highest phosphorus content. Amaranth and purslane contain more iron than either of the well-known high-iron vegetables, spinach and chard. In potassium content, chicory is exceeded only by chard and spinach. Dandelion greens, curled dock, and lamb's-quarters all contain far more vitamin A than spinach or any other garden vegetable, and curled dock, watercress, lamb's-quarters, and amaranth are all rich in vitamin C, exceeded in concentration only by green peppers.

The figures given in Gibbon's table are only averages; of course, the actual amounts and concentrations of these substances vary considerably with the locality of the plant, the conditions under which it grows, the stage of its life cycle, and other factors, but even allowing for such variation, the evidence of this and other studies indicates a tremendous richness in the nutritional value

of many of our weeds. It seems incredible that they are so thoroughly ignored in an increasingly nutrition-conscious society.

A family of four can easily spend a dollar per day on vegetables. An ordinary tossed salad with lettuce and a few other greens can cost from 60 cents to a dollar or more in a restaurant. Present trends indicate that the price of fresh produce will only continue to rise. Those with gardens can cut down significantly on their grocery bills and have fresher, more wholesome vegetables at the same time. However, as any gardener will attest, growing vegetables is fraught with problems, not the least of which is coping with the myriad weeds that seem to appear out of nowhere the first time the shovel is pushed into the ground. It is reassuring to know that these same weeds can cut down on your grocery bills, as do the vegetables they grow with. Many are available in the early spring, before your vegetables are ready to harvest, and in the fall, when most of the garden produce is finished. Some, like chickweed, can even be gathered during the winter, in areas where there is little snow cover. Utilized to their fullest, weeds can increase the potential of your garden and can certainly make it more interesting. If you do not have a garden, try volunteering to weed those of your friends and relatives—they will thank you for it and you can gather your supper at the same time! Or visit the nearest vacant lot, field, or unkempt boulevard. Just one serving of weeds a week can make a substantial difference to both your menus and your budget.

In the future, private gardeners and large-scale agriculturalists alike may find it practical to grow some so-called weeds as bona fide crop plants. This was done in the past and is still being done in some parts of the world. Watercress, salsify, burdock, amaranth, shepherd's purse, lamb's-quarters, dandelion, and others deserve more investigation by Canadians as possible future sources of food. Jerusalem artichoke, comfrey, orache, and spearmint are already present in many Canadian gardens, but often are not utilized to their full advantage.

We need to take a long, hard look at our conservative eating habits, our less-than-ideal nutrition, and the amount of money we spend on food. We should be able to do better in all three areas. Weeds can help if only we let them.

How to Gather and Prepare Edible Weeds

If you can use a knife and a spade you have the key to a successful meal of weedy vegetables. In fact, your own two hands are adequate tools to collect many weeds. For the most part, the gathering procedures call for simple common sense. Almost all weedy greens are best when they are young and tender. This means collecting the new plants in the spring or gathering the growing tips of the plants later in the season. Many are still quite satisfactory when harvested during flowering or fruiting, but they usually have a stronger flavour and are tougher.

Some weed greens can be kept mild and tender over a long period of time by a process known as blanching. This involves placing a light-proof covering, wood or black plastic for example, over the growing plants. The growth, without the aid of sunlight, becomes elongated and whitish and makes a very succulent dish. You have probably seen this kind of growth if you have uncovered a plant growing under a rock or a board in your garden. Dandelions and chicory are especially good when blanched.

Edible taproots, like those of dandelion, salsify, burdock, and evening-primrose, are best dug before the flowers appear in spring or summer, as long as enough time is left for the roots to develop sufficiently. Rhizomes, like clover or couch grass, are good in spring and fall. Jerusalem artichoke tubers are available throughout the winter months in areas where there is little snow cover. Plants whose seeds are to be used, like bedstraw, shepherd's purse, amaranth, lamb's-quarters, barnyard grass, and buckwheat, should be allowed to mature until just before the seeds are ready to drop off. The seeds can then be collected by hitting the tops of the plants while holding a tray or paper bag underneath them or by picking the tops with the seeds attached, allowing them to dry and ripen, and then shaking them into a bag. Chaff and small bits of leaf can often be removed by placing the seeds on a tray and lightly tossing, or winnowing, them on a breezy day.

Weeds that are collected for use as teas or flavourings should be harvested when fully mature, on a warm, dry morning. They can be used fresh, or dried and stored for year-round use. To dry plants simply spread them out in a warm, well-ventilated room or in the sun on a good day, and then store them in a tightly closed container at room temperature until you need them.

Weeds require varying amounts of preparation before they are eaten. Many greens need only to be washed and can then be used directly, either raw in salads or cooked as potherbs. Some prickly ones, like thistle and sow-thistle, should be trimmed at the edges, and the stems of both thistle and burdock need to be peeled before use. Some plants, like stinging nettle and milkweed, must be cooked before they are eaten. Taproots and other underground parts should be washed thoroughly. They can be peeled, but often it

is preferable just to give them a good scrubbing and cook them with their skins on. If you do peel them, they should be cooked soon after, as most discolour quickly. Soaking them in cold water with a little vinegar or ascorbic acid helps prevent discoloration.

A number of weeds, both greens and roots, are bitter or sharp-tasting, and are much improved by boiling in one or more changes of water before serving or using as an ingredient in a recipe. If you do not like strong flavours you should follow this procedure.

You may prefer to keep your weed dishes plain and simple; just serve them alone with a little butter, salt, lemon juice, or dressing. However, many are best when mixed with other foods in salads, soups, stews, and casseroles. Try combining two or more weeds together; often one taste and texture complements another, as in the recipes that follow.

Do not be afraid to experiment with the weeds you have at your disposal. Substitute them for more conventional vegetables in everyday dishes or try something completely new. You may come up with a real prize-winner.

Spring Salad Deluxe

250 ml young dandelion greens	1 cup
250 ml nipplewort leaves	1 cup
250 ml shepherd's purse leaves	1 cup
250 ml plantain leaves	1 cup
250 ml chickweed leaves	1 cup
125 ml sheep sorrel leaves	1/2 cup
15 ml chopped spearmint leaves	1 tbsp
5 ml shepherd's purse seeds *or* peppergrass seeds with pods (saved from previous year)	1 tsp
125 ml cider vinegar	1/2 cup
125 ml sesame oil *or* olive oil	1/2 cup
15 ml honey	1 tbsp
2 ml salt	1/2 tsp
1 ml dry mustard	1/4 tsp

Wash and tear first six ingredients into bite-size pieces. Mix together mint, seeds, vinegar, oil, honey, salt, and mustard. Pour over greens. Toss lightly and serve immediately. Serves 6.

Cosmopolitan Weed Stew

250 ml purslane leaves	1 cup
250 ml salsify roots (peeled just before cooking)	1 cup
250 ml amaranth *or* lamb's-quarters seeds	1 cup
250 ml burdock roots (peeled just before cooking)	1 cup
250 ml chickweed leaves and stems	1 cup
250 ml chicory greens	1 cup
250 ml watercress	1 cup
250 ml comfrey leaves	1 cup
50 ml wood-sorrel leaves	1/4 cup
2 bay leaves	
5 ml thyme	1 tsp
5 ml tarragon	1 tsp
1 onion, diced	
75 ml olive oil	1/3 cup
15 ml chopped parsley	1 tbsp
salt, pepper to taste	

Wash greens and place all ingredients in a heavy saucepan with enough water to cover. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to simmer, stirring frequently until vegetables are soft (about 20 minutes). Cover and allow to stand a few minutes before serving. Remove bay leaves. Serve with crusty whole-wheat rolls as a delicious, exotic meal. Serves 4–6.

Healthful Weed Cocktail

750 ml mixed greens (lamb's-quarters, dandelion, chicory, chickweed, sheep sorrel, comfrey, purslane, wild lettuce), washed and shredded	3 cups
50 ml spearmint leaves, washed	1/4 cup
grated peel and juice of 1 lemon and 1 orange	
1 L boiling water	4 cups
5 ml honey	1 tsp
1 L tomato juice	4 cups
salt, pepper to taste	

Place greens, lemon peel, and orange peel in a saucepan. Add water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer slowly for about 20 minutes until greens are soft, and then press through a sieve or liquefy in an electric blender. Add lemon, orange and tomato juices, honey, and seasonings. Serve. You can reheat this and serve it as a hot drink, or chill and serve it with a wedge of lemon or a sprig of mint. Excellent with cheese and crackers. Serves 6–8.

Format

This book includes only flowering plants, technically known as Angiosperms. Within this large division of plants are two major subdivisions, the Monocotyledons and the Dicotyledons. The former includes such plant families as lilies, orchids, palms, sedges, and grasses; the latter includes buttercups and their relatives, mustards, umbelliferous plants, legumes, roses and their relatives, and composites. The majority of weeds belong to the Dicotyledons. In fact, we have included only two monocotyledonous plants, both of which belong to the grass family (Poaceae or Gramineae). We have placed these at the beginning. The rest, all Dicotyledons, are grouped in alphabetical order of their families' scientific names, and within each family in alphabetical order of their individual scientific names (genus and species).

Do not be intimidated by the scientific names. They are not used to put you off or to reveal your lack of botanical knowledge, but simply because the same plant or group of plants may have two, three, or more colloquial, or common, names in various parts of the country, not to mention all the names a plant may have in other countries of the world. Latinized scientific names are standardized the world over, and are thus the only truly accurate means of distinguishing a given plant. If you recognize a plant by one of the common names used in this book, you can ignore the scientific terminology altogether, unless you need it to look up the plant in another botanical work.

For each species the most commonly applied colloquial names of both the plant and its family are included in the top outer margins. The corresponding scientific names are given at the bottom of the page. Sometimes two or more related species are treated together if they are used similarly. Alternative or local common names are listed next, followed by a description of the plant, a summary of its distribution in Canada, and general remarks on its use as a food. Finally, you will find recipes for the plant and a few interesting details about its history or its use in technology or folk medicine.

Since the book is written mainly for the layman, we have tried to keep technical jargon to a minimum, but sometimes it is necessary to use certain specialized words that may be unfamiliar to you. For this reason we have included a glossary for your convenience. Also, as mentioned earlier, an appendix is included, listing potentially dangerous weedy plants that you should avoid.

Sources of Information

A book such as this involves the use of numerous reference sources, in this case both botanical and culinary. Some of these were particularly valuable to us and should be singled out for special mention. Two books on Canadian weeds were useful in determining the characteristics and distributions of edible weeds: *Weeds of Canada* by C. Frankton and G.A. Mulligan, and *Common Weeds of Canada* by G.A. Mulligan. The first is fairly detailed and technical, and is available in separate English and French editions; the second, a bilingual publication, is quite general. Also valuable as botanical references were: *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest* by C.L. Hitchcock et al.; *Wild Plants of the Canadian Prairies* by A.C. Budd and K.F. Best: *Common Weeds of the United States*, prepared by the Agricultural Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture: and *All About Weeds* by E.R. Spencer.

Of the numerous volumes on edible and useful wild plants we found the following most helpful: *Edible Wild Plants of Eastern North America* by M.L. Fernald and A.C. Kinsey, *Sturtevant's Edible Plants of the World* by E.L. Sturtevant, *Edible Wild Plants* by O.P. Medsger, *Food for Free* by R. Mabey, *How to Enjoy Your Weeds* by A.W. Hatfield, *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* and *Stalking the Healthful Herbs* by E. Gibbons, *The Edible Wild* by B. Berglund and C.E. Bolsby, *Eat the Weeds* by B.C. Harris, and *Feasting Free on Wild Edibles* and *Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants* by B. Angier. Information on weeds as honey plants was obtained from the classic volume, *The A B C and X Y Z of Bee Culture* by A.I. Root and E.R. Root.

Our main reference for poisonous weeds was the comprehensive work *Poisonous Plants of the United States and Canada* by J.M. Kingsbury. Information on the use of weeds as medicinal herbs came from many of the previously named books as well as two others: J. Gerard's *The Herbal or General History of Plants*, which is a reprint of the complete 1633 edition, and *The New Family Herbal* by M. Robinson.

A number of excellent cookbooks gave us inspiration in our experiments with recipes for edible weeds. These include *The Joy of Cooking* by I.S. Rombauer and M.R. Becker, *Confessions of a Sneaky Organic Cook* by J. Kinderlehrer, *The New York Times Natural Foods Cookbook* by J. Hewitt, and *Japanese Foods: Tested Recipes* by Hui Manaolana.

The reader will find a complete list of the publications used as references and those recommended for further reading in the Bibliography.

Edible Garden
Weeds

Couch Grass

(Grass Family)

Other Names
Quack grass, dog grass, quick grass, witch grass, twitch grass.

How to Recognize
Couch grass is a perennial up to 1 m tall or taller, commonly reproducing by extensively creeping slender underground rootstocks, or rhizomes. These rootstocks, whitish or yellowish and cordlike, are pointed at the tips and have roots arising only at the nodes. The flower stems (culms) are hollow and smooth, with 3 to 6 joints. The leaves are soft and flat, with crowded ribs and rough edges. The flowering heads (spikes) are either erect or lax, unbranched, and elongated, being made up of many flattened spikelets set in alternate notches along the axis.

Where to Find
This grass, a native of Europe, is common throughout much of the world. In Canada it is particularly abundant east of the Prairies. It is interesting that at the beginning of the twentieth century it was known in only a few localities in western Canada. Today you will find it in any settled region of the West. It spreads rapidly and becomes well established in lawns, gardens, waste places, and meadowlands.

How to Use

As gardeners everywhere will agree, this weed is most difficult to eradicate. The long, creeping rootstocks are edible, and though this feature is largely negated by their extreme toughness, we decided to include the plant because it is widely available throughout the year and is therefore valuable as an emergency food source. The tips of the rootstocks, the only tender portion, can be chewed raw in the spring. Otherwise, the entire rootstock should be roasted in the oven until dry, then ground into meal or flour, which can be used to bake bread or to thicken sauces.

Couch grass is a rich source of potassium, silicon, chlorine and other valuable minerals. A tea made from the rhizomes is both pleasant and healthful.

Suggested Recipes

Couch Grass Health Tea, or Tisane

	10 medium-size couch grass rhizomes (fresh or dried) for	
500 ml	**boiling water**	**2 cups**
	honey and lemon juice to taste	

Clean rhizomes thoroughly and cut into short segments. Infuse in boiling water in a covered teapot for about 15 minutes. Serve with honey and lemon juice. This tea is a good "pick-me-up".

More for Your Interest

The ivory-coloured tips of couch grass rhizomes are so powerful they can penetrate almost any obstacle in their path, even potatoes and tree roots. The name *couch* is said to have derived from Anglo-Saxon *civice*, meaning "vivacious", certainly an apt description for this vigorous, tenacious plant. Herbalists have valued it for centuries as a tonic, for relieving rheumatism, gout, kidney ailments, cystitis, and bladder ailments. Even dogs and cats seek it out to eat when they feel sick. In Italy and elsewhere in Europe, the rhizomes are carefully harvested and sold in the markets. They can be obtained in health-food shops in Canada, but it is much easier to gather your own.

In Europe, couch grass is recognized as wholesome forage for horses and cattle. It is generally considered a good binder plant for railway embankments, sand dunes, and places susceptible to washouts, and was probably introduced to this continent for this reason.

Barnyard Grass

(Grass Family)

Other Names
Cockspur grass, summer grass, water grass, jungle rice.

How to Recognize
This rather coarse annual grass grows up to 1 m or more in height. The stems are erect or sometimes spreading over the ground. The leaves are ribbon-like and slightly rough to the touch, with a prominent, pale midrib. The flowers and fruits are borne in dense, drooping, finger-like clusters at the ends of the stems. Each fruit is encased in a set of papery husks (glumes and lemmas). The largest (second) glume is rough, and the sterile lemma usually bears a long bristle (awn) at the tip. At maturity the husks are easily removed, exposing the brownish or yellowish shiny fruits, each less than 2 mm long.

Some botanists separate this grass into two distinct species, *E. crusgalli* and *E. pungens* (Poir.) Rydb., the former a native of Europe, the latter of North America; however, since both occupy weedy habitats and are very similar botanically, they need not be distinguished for our purposes.

Where to Find
Barnyard grass is widespread and plentiful throughout North America, especially in the East. It prefers moist, rich soils, such as those along irrigation ditches and riverbanks. Left untended, it can quickly take over gardens, cultivated fields, and pastures. As its name implies, it flourishes in barnyards and well-manured lots.

How to Use

Considering the abundance of barnyard grass, its fruits could be used as a good emergency source of grain for cereal and meal. The seeds must be collected promptly, as they quickly become overripe and fall to the ground. We recommend that you harvest the entire fruiting heads when they start to turn brown, allow them to dry thoroughly, and then extract the grains by rubbing the heads between your fingers, or beating them against a screen or tray. The chaff can be separated by winnowing the grains lightly on a windy day or in front of a fan.

The grains taste very much like millet (*Panicum miliaceum* L.) but are only about half the size. It is true that it will take you quite a long time to collect enough for a meal, but your efforts will certainly be rewarded. It is rather fun to undertake a challenge and serve barnyard grass muffins to your friends.

Suggested Recipes

Barnyard Grass Muffins

175 ml	all-purpose flour	3/4 cup
15 ml	baking powder	1 tbsp
2 ml	salt	1/2 tsp
250 ml	barnyard grass grains, ground into meal	1 cup
	1 egg	
250 ml	milk	1 cup
50 ml	melted shortening *or* vegetable oil	1/4 cup
25 ml	liquid honey	1 1/2 tbsp

Sift together flour, baking powder, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Add barnyard grass meal and stir well. In a separate bowl, beat egg until foamy and add to it milk, melted shortening *or* vegetable oil, and honey. Add this mixture to dry ingredients and stir until blended, being careful not to overmix. Fill greased muffin tins two-thirds full and bake at 190°C (375°F) for 20 minutes. Makes 12 large muffins.

Note: For fruit muffins, make as above, adding 125 ml (1/2 cup) seedless raisins, currants, or chopped dried apricots to the dry ingredients.

More for Your Interest

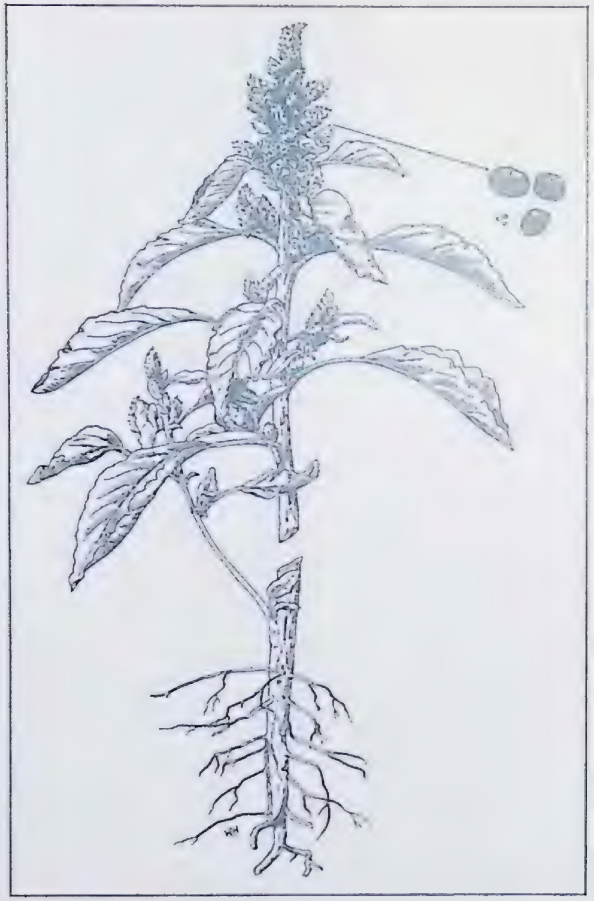
Barnyard grass is cultivated at present as a grain in Asia and Africa. Some Indian groups in California also cultivated it on a limited basis. The seeds make an excellent treat for canaries, finches, and other cage birds. They are as tasty as millet and free for the picking. Collect the mature fruiting heads and hang them upside-down in bunches in the cage or, for wild birds, in trees and bird feeders.

Green Amaranth

(Amaranth Family)

Other Names
Often called pigweed because it prefers well-manured soil, such as that found around pigpens; also called redroot or wild beet, referring to the reddish roots and stem bases.

How to Recognize
The green amaranth is a coarse annual with simple to freely branched stems up to 1 m tall. The leaves are rather long-stalked and dull green, with smooth, somewhat wavy edges, tapering to a blunt tip. The flowers are in a dense, green, scaly spike, seldom recognized as a blossom. The seeds are small, black, and glossy. Several other edible species of amaranth are commonly encountered. Prostrate amaranth, or prostrate pigweed (*A. graecizans* L.), is a low, spreading plant with small oval-shaped leaves. Tumbling amaranth, or tumbleweed (*A. albus* L.), is erect, up to 1 m high, with several stems forming a rounded "ball" that tends to twist off at the base at maturity and tumble in the wind. The leaves are small and oval, with finely pointed tips. The flowers and fruits of both species grow in small clusters at the leaf bases. The plants are edible only when young and tender.



***Amaranthus retroflexus* L.**
(Amaranthaceae)

Where to Find

Amaranths are common in cultivated land or waste places over much of the continent. You will find them, especially the green amaranth, as early crops in the garden. They germinate very quickly, and in many places make up as much as 20 to 30 per cent of the early weed population. They grow from sea-level to moderate elevations in the mountains. The green amaranth is considered to be native to tropical America originally, but is now widely distributed in the Americas, Europe, and Asia.

How to Use

You will find that the delicate flavour of amaranths makes them superior to almost any other green, cultivated or wild. They lend themselves to a wide range of excellent dishes. The young, tender stalks and leaves can be used in salads, mixed with other vegetables, or used alone with a favourite dressing. Alternatively, they can be cooked in a variety of ways. Try some of our recipes or invent some yourself. Soon you will find a new exciting specialty dish all your own at an astonishingly low price. In eating amaranths you will do your garden—and your pocketbook—a service.

Suggested Recipes

Amaranth Salad, French Style

1 L	young amaranth leaves, washed and patted dry	4 cups
50 ml	olive oil	1/4 cup
	1 clove garlic, minced	
30 ml	wine vinegar	2 tbsp
	salt, black pepper to taste	
250 ml	French-style croutons	1 cup
50 ml	Roquefort cheese, crumbled	1/4 cup

Tear amaranth leaves into small pieces. Add olive oil, garlic, wine vinegar, and seasonings. Toss lightly. Before serving, add croutons and Roquefort cheese. Toss thoroughly and serve. Serves 4–6.

Amaranth Salad, German Style

1 L	young amaranth leaves, washed and patted dry	4 cups
30 ml	salad oil (first amount)	2 tbsp
	salt, black pepper to taste	
1 ml	garlic salt	1/4 tsp
50 ml	wine vinegar	1/4 cup
250 ml	cold, cooked potatoes	1 cup
	paprika	
250 ml	chopped, cooked bacon *or* ham *or* sausage	1 cup
30 ml	salad oil (second amount)	2 tbsp

Tear amaranth leaves into bite-size pieces and place in a salad bowl. Add salad oil (first amount), salt, black pepper, garlic salt, and wine vinegar. Marinate at room temperature for about 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Just before serving, peel potatoes, dice, and add paprika and chopped meat. Heat salad oil (second amount) in frying pan. Add potato mixture and fry until potatoes are golden brown; toss into salad and serve immediately. Serves 4–6.

Amaranth Casserole, Canadian Style

125 ml	water	1/2 cup
1 L	fresh amaranth leaves, washed	4 cups
	salt, pepper to taste	
125 ml	old Cheddar cheese, grated	1/2 cup
50 ml	breadcrumbs	1/4 cup
	butter	

Bring water to a boil, add amaranth leaves, reduce heat, and simmer until tender (10–15 minutes). Drain and add seasonings. Place in a greased casserole. Sprinkle with Cheddar cheese and breadcrumbs. Dot with butter. Bake at 180°C (350°F) until cheese is melted (15–20 minutes). Serve hot on toast. Serves 4.

More for Your Interest

Amaranth species are cultivated as food by native peoples in many parts of the world, particularly in the tropics. They are used in salads and as potherbs, and the seed of some species is harvested in quantity and ground into a nutritious flour.

Milkweeds

(Milkweed Family)

Other Names
Silkweed, butterfly weed, cotton bush.

How to Recognize
These are perennial plants that exude a milky juice (latex) when broken or injured. They have creeping rootstocks and often grow in large clumps. The stems are sturdy and erect, up to 1 m tall. The leaves are in opposite pairs, being fleshy, oblong, and smooth-edged, with a prominent central rib. They grow up to 20 cm long and about half as wide. They are usually greyish green in colour, due to a dense mat of soft, silky hairs covering both surfaces or the upper side only. Pleasantly fragrant flowers, from almost white to lilac-purple in colour (other species have red or orange flowers), are arranged in dense umbrella-like clusters borne on the upper part of the main stem and branches. Each delicate blossom has 5 sepals and 5 petals, which are turned back to expose the centre of the flower. Behind the stamens you will find small hoods, each with an incurved horn. All these parts can be examined under an ordinary magnifying glass. The fruits are large, warty pods that develop in summer. They eventually split along one side, exposing silk-tufted seeds that when airborne are very attractive to observe.

Where to Find
In Canada you will find milkweed from coast to coast. The abundant eastern species, *Asclepias syriaca*, is common from the Maritimes to Manitoba. The superficially similar western species, *A. speciosa*, is common in the Prairie Provinces and in the dry interior of British Columbia. These two species and several others are native to Canada and the United States.

Generally, milkweeds grow best in dry, open places—roadsides, old neglected fields, and vacant lots—where they can become very weedy.

How to Use
There are several species of edible milkweed. The two discussed here are the most common in Canada, and are known to be harmless to humans when eaten in reasonable quantities. Only young shoots (up to about 10 cm long), very young leaves, and the half-matured green seedpods should be used, as the plants become rather bitter and tough with age. Milkweeds should always be cooked, never eaten raw. To eliminate any bitterness, it is recommended that you boil the plants in two changes of water; the milky latex that causes the bitterness is leached out in the boiling water. The best procedure is to cover the greens with boiling water, bring to a boil again over high heat, drain, and repeat if necessary. Milkweeds require longer cooking than most other vegetables. Of course, the cooking time will depend on how crisp you like your vegetables.

The easiest way to serve milkweed is with butter or a sauce of your choice. Add a few drops of lemon juice for a fresh taste. Some people say cooked milkweed tastes like a cross between green beans and asparagus. It is our opinion that this plant is one of the most interesting wild vegetables, a gourmet treat that lends itself to many applications. For example, the young pods are good served as a side dish with roasts or steak, or can be added to stews. In regions where the plant is common, one can store it for winter by dehydrating or freezing processes. It could even be sold on the market, as fiddleheads are. The flowers can be cooked with meat as a thickener, tenderizer, and sweetener. They have been used since the eighteenth century for making brown sugar. There are many recipes utilizing milkweed. You can try one of ours or, better still, make up one of your own.

Warning: It is important to be absolutely certain of the identity of the milkweed you pick. The milky juice (latex) alone is not adequate for identification as it is found in other less desirable species. You should read carefully the identification features described above. In addition, it is known that some species of *Asclepias* at certain stages are poisonous to animals, and could also affect humans when eaten raw. Further information concerning the toxicity of milkweed can be found in Kingsbury's *Poisonous Plants of the United States and Canada*.

Suggested Recipes

Chicken Paprikash with Milkweed, Hungarian Style

500 ml	**milkweed shoots and pods, washed and chopped**	**2 cups**
15 ml	**lard**	**1 tbsp**
	2 large onions, finely chopped	
15 ml	**paprika**	**1 tbsp**
	1 small frying chicken, cut up	
	salt, pepper to taste	
15 ml	**flour**	**1 tbsp**
45 ml	**light cream**	**3 tbsp**

Cover milkweed with lightly salted boiling water, bring to a boil again, reduce heat, and simmer for 10 minutes. Drain and set aside. In a pan melt lard and add onion. Simmer over very low heat until onion is limp but not brown. Add paprika, stir, and cook for 3 minutes. Add chicken, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes. Add milkweed and seasonings, and simmer for an additional 30 minutes. Stir flour and cream until well blended, and add to chicken mixture. Bring to a boil and cook for 3 additional minutes only, as cream might curdle when overcooked. Serve with dumplings or rice. Serves 4.

Farmer's Soup

500 ml	milkweed shoots and pods, washed	2 cups
15 ml	butter *or* margarine	1 tbsp
	1 onion, finely chopped	
250 ml	sliced mushrooms	1 cup
750 ml	beef broth *or* 1 can beef consommé, diluted with 1 can of water	3 cups
250 ml	cooked beef, cubed	1 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	

Cover milkweed with lightly salted boiling water, bring to a boil again, reduce heat, and simmer for about 15 minutes. Drain, chop into small pieces, and set aside. In a soup pot, melt butter *or* margarine, add onion and mushrooms, and sauté for 10 minutes. Add broth *or* consommé with water, milkweed, and beef. Season, cover, and simmer at low heat for 15 minutes. Serve hot with toast. Serves 4.

Milkweed, Sukiyaki Style

375 ml	milkweed shoots and pods, washed and chopped	1½ cups
250 g	round steak, cut into very thin strips	½ lb
250 ml	sliced mushrooms	1 cup
250 ml	celery, sliced diagonally	1 cup
250 ml	green onions, cut in small pieces	1 cup
50 ml	soy sauce	¼ cup
250 ml	sake *or* dry white wine	1 cup

Cover milkweed with lightly salted boiling water, bring to a boil again, reduce heat, and simmer for 10 minutes. Drain and set aside. Put steak and mushrooms in the centre of a large frying pan; then put milkweed in one corner, celery in another, and green onions in another. Pour in soy sauce and sake *or* wine. Cover and simmer until beef and mushrooms are tender, approximately 5–10 minutes. The vegetables should be cooked, but still crisp. Serve hot with rice. Serves 4.

Note: This recipe may be varied by using chicken or cooked pork, sliced thin. The mushrooms should be firm, preferably Japanese pine mushrooms, *Armillarea ponderosa*, which are usually available in Oriental food stores.

Indian Chewing Gum

Break the stems of several milkweed plants, and allow the white latex to accumulate at the end of each stem and harden for several minutes. Then pull off the droplets and press them together. Let them harden further until they are of the consistency of rubber. (You can speed up this process by putting them in cold water for a few minutes.) The gum may taste bitter at first, but it soon becomes quite mild and pleasant.

More for Your Interest

Milkweed is named after the legendary Greek physician and god of medicine, Asklepios (in Latin, Aesculapius). North American Indians have long valued the plant as a medicine for curing warts, ringworm, cuts, and infections. Indian women of Quebec drank an infusion of pounded milkweed roots to induce temporary sterility. The concentrated liquid was even applied to neutralize rattlesnake bites. The stem fibres of mature plants were used by some Indian peoples to make twine, fishnets, and cloth.

The economic possibilities of milkweed are many. The milky latex can be used as an emergency substitute for rubber. The stem fibres can be employed by textile manufacturers. The seedpods are very decorative and can be used by florists. The flowers can be used by gardeners as a butterfly attractant, particularly for the beautiful monarch, whose caterpillars feed on the leaves. For those who are interested in this plant and its uses, we suggest a most interesting article by Mary I. Moore, "The Common Milkweed", published in the *Ontario Naturalist*.

Common Burdock

(Aster or Composite Family)

Other Names
Lesser burdock, clotbur, bardane, beggar's buttons, harlock.

How to Recognize
Burdock is a robust biennial that grows from a long, fleshy taproot. The first-year plant consists of a large clump of broad rhubarb-like leaves, with somewhat heart-shaped and often shallowly lobed blades and thick, hollow stalks. The blades may be hairy or densely woolly beneath, but are usually smooth above. During the second year a stout, leafy flowering stem grows up from the root. This may be up to 2 m high and often has many branches. The stem leaves, borne alternately, are much smaller than the basal ones. The flower heads, which appear from July to September, are numerous and are scattered towards the ends of the branches. They are globe-shaped and about the size of marbles. The flowers themselves are purple or, rarely, white. Each head is surrounded by numerous hooked, spiny bracts, which, when the fruits ripen, catch on the fur of unsuspecting animals and on the clothing and hair of children. When one tries to remove them, the heads break apart and have to be pulled off one piece at a time. Sometimes there is no alternative but to cut them out with scissors. No one can deny that burdock has a most efficient system of seed dispersal!

Another species of burdock, the greater burdock (*A. lappa* L.), is locally abundant in parts of Canada. It is similar to the common burdock, but has larger flower heads that open widely in fruit and are arranged in more of a flat-topped mass at the end of the stems. The lower leafstalks are solid, not hollow. Greater burdock can be eaten in the same way as common burdock.

Where to Find
Burdock is a native of Europe. It is found in every province in Canada but is said to be more abundant in the East. It grows in moist, fertile soils—farmyards, pastures, roadsides, and waste places.

How to Use
The most agreeable part of the burdock is the long, fleshy taproot of the first-year plants. It has been prized as a vegetable by the Japanese for centuries, being widely cultivated in Japan under the name of *gobo*. To prepare the root, which may grow up to half a metre long, peel and cut it into slices or thin sticks, and then cook it. To prevent the whitish flesh from discolouring during preparation, it should be placed immediately in cold water to which a little vinegar has been added. Soaking in this solution for 15 to 20 minutes before cooking makes the roots crisp and succulent. Some find *gobo* tasteless and tough, but in our experience it is pleasant and crisp—similar in flavour and texture to salsify, which is well known in French cuisine. The roots can also be eaten raw, or can be dried and stored for winter use.

The stalks of burdock (before the flower heads have enlarged) can be peeled and eaten raw, like radishes, with a little salt and pepper, or boiled in meat broth and eaten

***Arctium minus* (Hill) Bernh.**
(Asteraceae or Compositae)

Arctium minus
plant and roots

like asparagus. A little baking soda added to the water is said to keep them crisp and green while cooking. Be careful to remove every shred of the bitter-tasting rind. You may find it necessary to boil the stalks in two changes of water. The young leaves, upper stems, and branches are also edible if boiled in two changes of water.

When we learn to appreciate burdock as food, we will no longer find it obnoxious, nor will we feel the need to eliminate it from our yards. Try some of our Japanese *gobo* recipes and bring a touch of the exotic to your cuisine.

Suggested Recipes

Gobo* in Vinegar Sauce

	4 large burdock roots	
2 ml	vinegar (first amount)	1/2 tsp
25 ml	soy sauce	1 1/2 tbsp
125 ml	chicken *or* beef broth	1/2 cup
30 ml	sugar	2 tbsp
30 ml	vinegar (second amount)	2 tbsp
1 ml	monosodium glutamate (optional)	1/4 tsp
15 ml	sesame seeds	1 tbsp

Scrape skin off burdock roots and cut into thin diagonal slices. Soak in water for 5 minutes and drain. Cover with water, add vinegar (first amount), bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 8–10 minutes. Drain. In a saucepan combine all ingredients, except sesame seeds, and cook over moderate heat for 10–15 minutes. Garnish with sesame seeds and serve. Serves 4–6.

Deep-fried *Gobo**

	6 medium-size burdock roots	
25 ml	vinegar	1 1/2 tbsp
	1 egg white, stiffly beaten	
	tapioca	
500 ml	oil (for deep frying)	2 cups
	salt to taste	
	monosodium glutamate (optional)	

Scrape skin off burdock roots and cut into 7-cm (3-inch) lengths. Then cut each piece lengthwise, part-way through, forming a fan shape. Cover with water, add vinegar, and soak for 15–20 minutes. Drain and pat dry. Dip slivered ends of root into beaten egg white. Sprinkle with tapioca and deep fry. Drain on absorbent paper and sprinkle with salt and monosodium glutamate, if desired. Serve hot. Serves 2–4.

Fried *Gobo**

	8 large burdock roots	
15 ml	vegetable oil	1 tbsp
50 ml	soy sauce	1/4 cup
30 ml	sugar	2 tbsp
30 ml	shredded dried shrimp *or katsuobushi* (Japanese fish-soup powder)	2 tbsp
2 ml	monosodium glutamate (optional)	1/2 tsp
	crushed chili peppers *or* black pepper to taste	

Peel burdock roots and cut into slivers. Cover with water for 15–20 minutes. Drain. Put oil in a frying pan and sauté roots for 5–8 minutes. Add soy sauce, sugar, shredded shrimp *or katsuobushi*, and monosodium glutamate, if desired. Cook until sauce is absorbed. Add chili peppers *or* pepper, and serve. Serves 6–8.

Sliced Beef with *Gobo**

	1 or 2 burdock roots	
15 ml	vinegar	1 tbsp
75 ml	chicken *or* beef broth	1/3 cup
75 ml	soy sauce	1/3 cup
15 ml	coarse brown (demerara) sugar	1 tbsp
125 ml	*mirin* (sweet Japanese liquor)	1/2 cup
	dash of monosodium glutamate (optional)	
125 ml	sake *or* other sweet white wine	1/2 cup
500 g	round steak, sliced into very thin pieces	1 lb
	4 eggs, beaten	

Scrape roots with the back of a knife, and shave into slivers. Cover with water, add vinegar, and soak for 15–20 minutes. Rinse in clear water and drain. Make a sauce by mixing broth, soy sauce, brown sugar, *mirin*, and monosodium glutamate, if desired. Arrange burdock in one layer in a large skillet, and pour over half the sauce and half the sake *or* wine. Cook until burdock is done, about 15–20 minutes. Add steak to skillet, and pour remaining sake *or* wine over meat. Cook for about 10 minutes. When beef is partially cooked, add remaining sauce and continue cooking without stirring. When

*These recipes were modified from *Japanese Foods: Tested Recipes* by Hui Manaolana.

mixture comes to a boil, pour beaten eggs over top. Remove from heat as soon as egg mixture is slightly firm. Serves 4.

Candied Burdock Stems

	6 medium-size young burdock stems	
10 ml	salt	2 tsp
125 ml	vinegar (approximately)	1/2 cup
500 ml	water (approximately)	2 cups
	few drops green food-colouring	
500 ml	sugar	2 cups
125 ml	water	1/2 cup

Peel burdock stems and cut into short lengths. If they are very thick, cut them lengthwise also. Cover with water and salt, and let stand overnight. Drain and place in a saucepan with vinegar and water. Add food colouring and simmer until stems have absorbed enough colour, then drain. Add sugar to water, boil for 10 minutes, and pour syrup over burdock. Let stand overnight. The next day drain off syrup and reboil it for 1 minute. Pour over the stems and let stand overnight again. Finally, simmer the stems in the syrup until soft. Store in the syrup in a jar and use as a confection.

More for Your Interest

Canadians travelling to Hawaii will be surprised to find their weedy friend, the burdock, being cultivated and sold in grocery stores alongside carrots, cauliflower, and celery. Called by the Japanese name *gobo*, burdock roots sell for about $1.00 per bundle of a dozen or more. Do not pass up the opportunity to try them—it beats digging them up yourself from some rocky pasture! Perhaps we should follow the example of the Japanese and start to cultivate them in Canada.

The round, sticky burs of the burdock, so annoying when they stick to one's hair and clothing, are an interesting handicraft medium. They must be handled with care, however, as they break easily. They can be stuck together in a variety of shapes, including animals, buildings, and small containers. Unfortunately, they are fragile and cannot be kept easily, but making bur sculptures can be a pleasant diversion on an outing.

Chicory

(Aster or Composite Family)

Other Names
Blue sailors, wild succory, or wild endive.

How to Recognize
Chicory is a tall perennial, often over 1 m high, with a rigid, loosely branching stem and a deep, long, fleshy taproot. The leaves resemble those of dandelion in shape and taste. The lower ones, just above the root crown, are narrow and coarsely lobed. The stem leaves are toothed or smooth-edged, decreasing in size upwards. The flowers are borne 1 to 3 together in the axils of the upper leaves. They are large and showy, resembling daisies but lacking the yellow centre. Their bright sky-blue colour makes identification unmistakable. They close at night and in bright sunlight.

Where to Find
This plant is a native of Europe and Asia, now widely distributed and considered a cosmopolitan weed. In Canada it is most common from the Maritimes west to the Prairies, and then on the Pacific Coast west of the Cascade Mountains. You will find it in dry soil along roadsides and in fields and waste places, as well as in old gardens and orchards.

How to Use
The root is extensively used in Europe as a coffee substitute and adulterant. The plant may also be used as a potherb and salad green in unaltered or blanched form. The blanched type is known under the names of *witloof* or *French endive*. (True endive is a closely related plant.)

The forcing of chicory plants for blanched heads is the basis of a large industry in Belgium and France. The basal leaves, blanched in early spring by covering them during their growing period, make a good and interesting ingredient in many salads. If picked green, the leaves should be boiled in a few changes of water to remove the bitterness, and then cooked in the same manner as spinach.

For a change, try our recipe of tantalizing chicory canapé as an early-spring snack.

Suggested Recipes

Tantalizing Chicory Canapé

	4 slices pumpernickel bread	
	1 tin French *or* Portuguese sardines, packed in olive oil	
	10–12 blanched basal leaves of chicory, washed and dried	
	juice of 1/2 lemon	
1 ml	**Worcestershire sauce**	**1/4 tsp**
	salt, pepper to taste	
	grated Parmesan cheese	

Toast bread and cut into long strips. Drain sardines and reserve oil. Put chicory on toast and place half a sardine on each strip. Combine oil from sardines, lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce, and seasonings, blending well. Pour dressing over canapés. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese before serving. Makes about 12 canapés.

Chicory Coffee

Dig a few long chicory roots. Wash roots carefully and roast at 120°C (250°F) until brown and brittle-dry. Grind or powder them and store in a closed container. Blends well with regular coffee beans. Use approximately 25 ml (1 1/2 tbsp) ground chicory per 250 ml (1 cup) water.

More for Your Interest

Most of the chicory roots used on the American continent as a coffee substitute are imported from Europe, where the plants are cultivated for that purpose. The roots are boiled and eaten by Arabs to this day; in fact, the name *chicory* is derived from the Arabic *chicouryeh*.

Herbalists have used chicory, or succory as it is often called, for centuries as a cure for liver ailments, dropsy, ague, swooning, and "passions of the heart". It is taken as a decoction of the leaves or roots in water or wine. Bruised leaves can be applied to the skin to reduce swellings and inflammations.

Ox-Eye Daisy and English Daisy

(Aster or Composite Family)

Other Names
Ox-eye daisy is also called Marguerite, white daisy, or white-weed. English daisy is commonly known as perennial daisy.

How to Recognize
These flowers are so well known that they hardly need to be described. Natives of the Old World, they have become extremely abundant on the North American continent. Today one can say that daisies are among the first flowers we learn to recognize; every child on this continent knows them. Various other daisies are grown in gardens across the country, but none are as adaptable or prolific as the ox-eye and English daisies.

Ox-eye daisy is a perennial with shallow, creeping rootstocks and erect, mainly single stems up to 1 m high. The leaves, borne alternately along the stem, are dark green, elongated, and variously lobed. The flower heads are large and showy, with 15 to 20 white petal-like ray flowers and a conspicuous yellow disc. The combination of yellow centre and white rays makes ox-eye daisy one of the most attractive weedy plants. Sometimes entire fields are taken over by it, and the massed blooms are an unforgettable sight.

The English daisy is a small perennial, with spreading tufts of spoon-shaped basal leaves and solitary flower heads on short, slender stalks. The heads are single or sometimes double, with white, rose-coloured, or crimson-tipped ray flowers and yellow centres.

Where to Find
Both ox-eye daisy and English daisy were introduced early from western Europe as garden ornamentals. Both are widespread and abundant in Canada. Ox-eye daisy grows in old fields, pastures, boulevards, and uncut lawns, and along roadsides and railway rights-of-way. The English daisy is predominantly found in lawns and boulevards, where it can withstand considerable mowing, and blooms continuously from early spring to midsummer. The rosettes of rounded leaves press down on the soil and, like dandelion leaves, choke out the surrounding grass.

How to Use
The young leaves of both species can be used as salad greens, although they are somewhat pungent and strong-flavoured in our opinion. They are best used in small quantities as a condiment. The rootstocks of the ox-eye daisy were reportedly eaten as a potherb in Spain.

Like dandelion flowers, the flowers of the English daisy can be used to make a very acceptable wine.

Suggested Recipes

Daisy Wine

5–6 L	English daisy flowers, stalks removed	4–5 qts
6 L	boiling water	5 qts
1.5 kg	white sugar	3 1/2 lbs
500 g	golden raisins, chopped	1 lb
500 g	wheat kernels	1 lb
	rind and juice of 2 lemons	
	rind and juice of 2 oranges	
8 g	1 package dry yeast	1/4 oz

Place flowers in a crock and pour the boiling water over top. Let stand for 24 hours. Remove flowers and add to liquid: sugar, raisins, wheat, and rind and strained juice of citrus fruits. Stir until the sugar is dissolved. Dissolve yeast in 250 ml (1 cup) warm water with 5 ml (1 tsp) sugar sprinkled over. Let stand about 10 minutes and add to first mixture. Cover with a cloth and let stand for three weeks, stirring daily. After three weeks, pour the liquid into bottles and cork. Do not cork tightly until fermentation is complete. Do not use screw-type bottle caps—they can cause explosions. Store in a cool, dark place until the wine is clear. The wine should be matured in six months.

More for Your Interest

The leaves of a close relative of the ox-eye daisy, known as alecost, or costmary (*Chrysanthemum balsamita* L.), were formerly used in England to flavour ale and negus, and were used as a salad herb by the English and the French. The flowers of another chrysanthemum (*C. segetum* L.) grown in northern Japan and China were parboiled, dipped in vinegar, and eaten as a snack. Ox-eye daisy flowers could probably be used in the same manner.

Thistles

(Aster or Composite Family)

Other Names
Cirsium arvense is called Canada thistle or field thistle, and *C. vulgare* is known as bull thistle, Scottish thistle, or spear thistle.

How to Recognize
Thistles hardly need an introduction to gardeners and agriculturalists in Canada. Their sharp spines serve as an instant calling card to one and all. Canada thistle is a perennial, with slender, white creeping roots and erect stems often 1 m or more in height. The leaves, which grow alternately along the stem, are irregularly lobed and edged with numerous short, thin spines. The purple (occasionally white) flower heads are small compared with those of other thistles, but are more numerous, clustered at the top of the plant. Male and female flowers are borne in separate heads and usually on different plants, a rather unusual occurrence in thistles. Of course, only the female plants produce seeds, which are small, dark brown, and oblong, each tipped with a down-like parachute to aid in wind dispersal. In late summer and fall, large patches of female plants can be seen with huge puffs of white "down" clinging to the ripe fruiting heads.

Bull thistle is a biennial with a deep, fleshy taproot. The plants form a large rosette of basal leaves in the first year, and then in the second year grow robust flowering stems than can—in good sites—exceed 2 m in height. The leaves, often very hairy, are more sharply lobed than those of Canada thistle, and have long spines alternating with shorter ones. The leaf bases tend to run in lines down the stem, giving it a winged appearance. The flower heads are large (up to 5 cm high) and purple, with spiny bracts. The fruits, like those of Canada thistle, have large, woolly parachutes.

Several other kinds of thistles occur in different parts of Canada, but these two are the most weedy.

Where to Find
Canada thistle is, contrary to the popular name, a native of Eurasia, widely introduced in North America and found in all ten provinces of Canada, in cultivated fields, gardens, meadows, roadsides, and waste places. Bull thistle is also a native of Eurasia, now widespread in fields, gardens, and waste places of eastern Canada and British Columbia, and becoming abundant in the Prairie Provinces as well.

How to Use
The stalks of thistles can be used as greens in much the same way as those of burdock. The prickles and tough outer peel are removed, and the inner portion is used in salads or boiled in salted water until tender. Only the youngest shoots can be used in this manner; the mature stems are extremely fibrous and tough. The cooked stalks are mild and delicately flavoured, somewhat reminiscent of globe artichokes. The flowers, like those of the artichoke, can be used to curdle milk. The young leaves are also edible after the prickles have been completely removed, but this is a difficult task. Thistle roots,

***Cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop. and *C. vulgare* (Savi) Airy-Shaw**
(Asteraceae or Compositae)

Cirsium vulgare

especially those of first-year plants of the bull thistle, can be eaten raw, boiled, or roasted; they are nutritious but tough and rather bland. Canada thistle yields a high-quality honey, light-coloured and equal to the best clover honey on the market.

Suggested Recipes

Baked Thistle Roots

	12 large thistle taproots	
30 ml	melted butter	2 tbsp
2 ml	salt	1/2 tsp
175 ml	beef *or* chicken broth *or* water	3/4 cup
	fresh parsley, chopped fine	
	butter	

Pare thistle taproots and cut each in half. Place in a buttered casserole. Brush with melted butter, sprinkle with salt, and add broth *or* water. Bake at 190°C (375°F) for about 45 minutes or until tender. Sprinkle with parsley and serve with more butter. Serves 2–3.

Thistle Stew

1 kg	stewing beef, cut into chunks	2 lbs
30 ml	whole-wheat flour	2 tbsp
50 ml	vegetable oil	1/4 cup
	1 clove garlic, minced	
	1 large onion, chopped	
250 ml	beef broth	1 cup
250 ml	tomato sauce	1 cup
50 ml	chopped parsley	1/4 cup
2 ml	thyme	1/2 tsp
	1 bay leaf	
	12 peppercorns and 3 whole cloves, placed in a cheesecloth bag and tied	
125 ml	dry white wine	1/2 cup
250 ml	peeled young thistle stalks or young leaves, with prickles completely removed	1 cup
250 ml	young thistle roots, peeled and cut up	1 cup
125 ml	carrots, diced	1/2 cup
	1 stalk celery, chopped	

Shake beef and flour in a brown paper bag. Remove beef and brown over high

heat in oil. Reduce heat and add garlic, onion, beef broth, tomato sauce, herbs, spices, and wine. Simmer for 1 1/2 hours. Add thistle stalks and roots, carrots, and celery, and cook for an additional 30 minutes or until all the ingredients are tender. Remove cheesecloth bag. Serves 4–6.

More for Your Interest

Thistles have a long and honourable history. They were well known to the Greeks and Romans as a potherb. Dioscorides and Pliny recommended a decoction of the leaves and roots to be drunk to cure a stiff neck. Later, herbalists prescribed thistles for spasms, convulsions, rickets in children, and nervous disorders. The boiled roots were used as a deodorant in the form of a plaster. In Europe, the poor used the cottony seeds to stuff pillows, cushions, and mattresses, and less-than-honest manufacturers used them to adulterate down and feather stuffing. The bull thistle is considered a Scottish national emblem. It is said that in the days of the Scandinavian attacks on Great Britain, the Danes tried to sneak up on a Scottish camp in the night, travelling barefoot to maintain complete silence. One of the soldiers, however, stepped on a thistle, and his exclamations of pain soon roused the Scots and allowed them to repel the invaders.

In North America, Indians, explorers, and pioneers have relied on the various native thistles as a food in times of famine. Present-day pioneers will find both native and introduced thistles a convenient food source when the weed is young, and an excellent source of fibre for emergency snares, fishing lines, and fishnets when the plant is mature.

Jerusalem Artichoke

(Aster or Composite Family)

How to Recognize

This perennial, a close relative of the garden sunflower, grows up to 5 m tall. The underground stems bear many knobby tubers, the edible portion of the plant, of all shapes and sizes. The stems are stout and rough to the touch, with leaves along their entire length. Often a number of stems grow clustered together. The leaves are oval to lance-shaped, toothed, and sharply pointed. The flower heads, several to many, are borne towards the top of the plant. They resemble small yellow sunflowers, but lack the large brown discs that bear the edible sunflower seeds.

Where to Find

Jerusalem artichoke is a native of the New World, and has been cultivated by the Indians of central and eastern North America for centuries. Later, white settlers learned to use this delicious tuber, and it was widely cultivated in European gardens. In North America, especially in the East, it has become a widespread weed of old fields, waste places, roadsides, and abandoned gardens. When planted in the garden it will reappear year after year, for a new plant will sprout from the tiniest tuber or tuber fragment left in the ground the previous year.

How to Use

Within the twentieth century, Jerusalem artichoke lost some of its popularity as a vegetable in North America. However, it is now being rediscovered and is regaining its rightful place in our menus. Those who have access to it in their gardens or in nearby fields or vacant lots are fortunate indeed.

The tubers should not be dug until at least after the first frost, when the tops have died down for the winter. One of their most appealing features is that they stay fresh and firm throughout the winter when left in the ground. In fact, they do not store well in the cellar or refrigerator, and in regions where the climate is mild enough, they are best dug just before they are to be used, even if it means clearing away a layer of snow first.

Jerusalem artichokes are comparable to potatoes, but are yellower, crisper, and sweeter. Instead of starch they contain a complex sugar known as inulin. This substance breaks down more slowly than starch during digestion, making these tubers valuable to diabetics and others requiring a low-starch diet. The tubers may be used instead of potatoes in any number of dishes. For the most part, however, they should be treated not as a substitute but as a delicious food in their own right. They are excellent sliced raw in salads, or steamed in a small quantity of water in a saucepan. Care should be taken not to overcook them, as they become mushy and lose some of their delicate flavour. There is no need to peel them—a good scrubbing will do. Break the knobs off the large tubers to be sure no dirt is left in the cracks. "Jerusalems" may well become your favourite vegetable.

Helianthus tuberosus
flowers and tubers

***Helianthus tuberosus* L.**
(Asteraceae or Compositae)

Suggested Recipes

Jerusalem Artichoke Winter Salad

250 ml	Jerusalem artichokes, washed and cut into thin slivers	1 cup
250 ml	grated carrot	1 cup
125 ml	slivered celery	1/2 cup
250 ml	grated red cabbage	1 cup
	1 medium onion, finely chopped (optional)	
125 ml	raisins	1/2 cup
50 ml	chopped walnuts	1/4 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	
75 ml	mayonnaise	1/3 cup

Combine vegetables, raisins, and walnuts in a bowl. Add seasonings and mayonnaise, and mix thoroughly or serve in individual salad bowls with 15 ml (1 tbsp) mayonnaise and a dash of salt and pepper on the top of each. Other dressings, such as French or Thousand Island, may be substituted for mayonnaise. Serves 4.

Steamed Jerusalems

Scrub and slice 6 or 7 medium-size Jerusalem artichokes. Place in a vegetable steamer with 125 ml (1/2 cup) water and allow them to steam for 3 minutes or until pieces are soft when pierced with a fork. Serve at once with plenty of butter and salt and pepper to taste. Excellent with any meat or egg dish. Allow 2 medium tubers per person.

Jerusalem Cocktail

Scrub and chop into small pieces 5 or 6 Jerusalem artichoke tubers. Liquefy in your electric blender or juicer. Sprinkle chopped parsley or other herbs on top and drink immediately. Serves 1.

Broiled Jerusalem Artichokes

Scrub and slice 5 or 6 Jerusalem artichoke tubers. Dip slices in peanut oil and arrange on a cookie sheet. Sprinkle with a little salt or kelp powder, powdered thyme, marjoram, sweet basil, or other herbs, and place under oven broiler until nicely browned. Turn slices over and repeat the procedure. Serve at once with roast chicken or beef. Allow 2 medium tubers per person.

Jerusalem Artichoke Pickles

1 L	Jerusalem artichokes	4 cups
75 ml	coarse salt	1/3 cup
1 L	water	4 cups
500 ml	cider vinegar	2 cups
30 ml	mixed, whole pickling spice	2 tbsp

Peel Jerusalem artichokes. Choose small tubers or cut larger ones into thick slices. Mix salt and water and pour over tubers. Let stand overnight. Pour off salted water and pack loosely in sterilized jars. Put pickling spice in a cheesecloth bag and tie. Scald cider vinegar with pickling spice. Pour over Jerusalem artichokes. Seal immediately and store for 3 months before using.

Jerusalem Artichoke Chowder

	3 slices diced bacon	
	4 medium Jerusalem artichokes, scrubbed and cubed	
250 ml	diced raw carrots	1 cup
500 ml	chopped tomatoes	2 cups
250 ml	fresh *or* frozen peas	1 cup
	2 onions, thinly sliced	
	1 stalk celery, thinly sliced	
500 ml	shredded cabbage	2 cups
2 L	water	8 cups
	salt, pepper to taste	

Cook bacon until crisp. Drain fat. Add remaining ingredients and simmer slowly until vegetables are soft, about 30–45 minutes. Serves 8.

More for Your Interest

This plant is only distantly related to the true artichoke—also known as globe, or French, artichoke—whose edible portion is a large thistle-like flower head. The adjective *Jerusalem* is actually an English corruption of the Italian word *girasole*, which means "sunflower". The term *artichoke* is also derived from the Italian *articiocco*. As well as a food for humans, Jerusalem artichoke tubers have been used as livestock feed and as a commercial source of the sugar fructose.

Wild Lettuce

(Aster or Composite Family)

How to Recognize
Three edible species of wild lettuce deserve mention. Two of them, tall lettuce, or horseweed (*L. canadensis* L.), and wall lettuce [*L. muralis* (L.) Fresen.] are quite similar, being smooth, erect annuals or more commonly biennials, the first growing up to 3 m tall, the second usually under 1 m. The stems are hollow and leafy. The basal leaves are deeply cut, and the stem leaves are clasping and often sharply lobed. The flower heads are numerous, small, and yellow, in open terminal clusters. The stem and undersides of the leaves have a whitish bloom, and when broken exude a whitish milky juice (latex). Another species, prickly lettuce (*L. scariola* L.), is similar in form, but the stem and leaf midribs are lined with numerous weak prickles, and the leaf margins are bristly.

Where to Find
Wild lettuces occur in every province except possibly Newfoundland. They are found in gardens, fields, waste places, and woodlands. Wall lettuce tends to grow in moister, shadier places, for example along garden walls and in forested areas.

How to Use
These lettuces have a rather bitter taste, especially the older foliage. However, the bitterness is not unpleasant to some people, and the leaves make a most satisfactory potherb. To remove the bitter taste, change the water once or twice when cooking. The prickly lettuce is especially tender and

Lactuca scariola

***Lactuca* species**
(Asteraceae or Compositae)

makes a good salad plant and an excellent potherb, requiring very little cooking (the prickles on the young foliage are so weak that they are unobjectionable). The cooked greens of all three species can be chilled and used in salads in the same manner as cooked dandelion greens. The leaves are best picked in spring or early summer, before the plants flower.

Suggested Recipes

Wild Lettuce Greens

500 ml	young wild lettuce leaves, washed	2 cups
1 L	water	4 cups
	salt, black pepper to taste	
30 ml	melted butter	2 tbsp
30 ml	lemon juice	2 tbsp

Tear leaves into bite-size pieces. Bring 500 ml (2 cups) water to a boil, add leaves, reduce heat, and simmer for 3 minutes. Drain. Add 500 ml (2 cups) more water and simmer for 3 minutes longer. Drain and add seasonings. Combine butter and lemon juice and pour over greens. Toss and serve immediately. Serves 2.

Wild Lettuce–Yoghurt Salad

250 ml	wild lettuce leaves, washed	1 cup
75 ml	yoghurt	1/3 cup
15 ml	Parmesan cheese	1 tbsp
	salt, pepper to taste	

Tear leaves into bite-size pieces. Add yoghurt and toss well. Sprinkle with cheese and seasonings. This is a tangy salad with a touch of bitterness that some find quite pleasant. Serves 1.

More for Your Interest

The wild lettuces are closely related to our garden lettuce; in fact, botanists believe the prickly lettuce to be the wild ancestor of the cultivated forms of lettuce. Did you know that "the milkie juice which issueth forth of the wounded stalkes and rootes" of wild lettuce has the capacity to heal "the stingings of scorpions and bitings of spiders"? It can also supposedly be used to cleanse eye ulcers, heal scalds and burns, and "procure" sleep. These and many other "virtues" of wild lettuce were listed by the famous botanist John Gerard in his monumental work *The Herbal or General History of Plants*.

Nipplewort

(Aster or Composite Family)

How to Recognize

Nipplewort is a light-green, slightly hairy annual with a single, erect stem often over 1 m high. The leaves are thin and stalked with rounded, shallowly lobed blades sometimes having separate basal segments. The blades usually decrease in size towards the top of the plant, and the stalks become shorter. The flower heads are small and light yellow, resembling tiny dandelion heads, in a loose terminal cluster.

Where to Find

Common in gardens, fields, recently disturbed sites, and shaded woodlands.
A native of Eurasia, now widely established in North America.

How to Use

The leaves may be eaten raw in salads, or cooked in as many different ways as your imagination will allow. The young plants that have not yet flowered are considered the best, but in our experience even the older plants make quite satisfactory greens.

***Lapsana communis* L.**
(Asteraceae or Compositae)

Suggested Recipes

Tasty Nipplewort Omelette

	1 egg	
50 ml	yoghurt	1/4 cup
250 ml	fresh nipplewort leaves, washed	1 cup
	2 strips cooked, crumbled bacon	
25 ml	finely chopped onion	1 1/2 tbsp
	salt, cayenne pepper to taste	
5 ml	butter	1 tsp

Beat egg with a whisk. Beat in yoghurt. Add nipplewort leaves, bacon, onion, and seasonings. Stir until mixed. Melt butter in a small frying pan; when it starts to bubble, pour egg mixture into pan and reduce heat slightly. Cook until egg sets. Serve immediately. Excellent with boiled new potatoes. Serves 1.

Nipplewort–Carrot Salad

500 ml	nipplewort leaves, washed and well dried	2 cups
500 ml	grated carrot	2 cups
125 ml	raisins	1/2 cup
15 ml	lemon juice	1 tbsp
45 ml	mayonnaise	3 tbsp
2 ml	fresh thyme, finely chopped	1/2 tsp
5 ml	fresh mint leaves, finely chopped	1 tsp
	salt to taste	

Cut nipplewort leaves into thin strips. Add remaining ingredients and mix thoroughly. Chill and serve. Serves 4.

More for Your Interest

This plant, like all those belonging to the aster family, has composite flower heads. In this species the heads consist of about a dozen tiny but complete flowers, each producing a single hard, dry fruit. Although the flower heads resemble miniature dandelions, the fruits are not parachuted like those of their big-headed relative, and thus are not as capable of long-distance travel.

Sow-Thistle

(Aster or Composite Family)

Other Names

Sonchus arvensis is known as perennial sow-thistle, *S. asper* as spiny-leaved sow-thistle, and *S. oleraceus* as common sow-thistle. These plants are also called milk thistle, swine's thistle, and hare's lettuce.

How to Recognize

Representatives of the same family as the true thistles (*Cirsium* species), sow-thistles are distinguished from them by their bitter, milky juice (latex) and their yellow flowers, which resemble small dandelion flowers. The three species listed are very much alike in appearance, but as all are equally edible, there is no danger in mistaking one for the other.

The perennial sow-thistle (*S. arvensis*) reproduces by seeds and by long, creeping roots that fragment easily. The other two species are taprooted annuals, propagating themselves by seed. Perennial sow-thistle grows up to 2 m tall; the others are commonly under 1 m. All have long, bluish-green, prickly-margined (more or less) leaves that alternate along the stem, decreasing in size upwards. The basal leaves are generally more strongly lobed than the upper ones. The upper leaves conspicuously clasp the stem with ear-like projections. The leaf lobes of *S. arvensis* and *S. oleraceus* are sharp; those of *S. asper* are rounder and

Sonchus asper (left)
Sonchus oleraceus (right)

***Sonchus arvensis* L., *S. asper* (L.) Hill, and *S. oleraceus* L.**
(Asteraceae or Compositae)

hallower. The yellow flower heads of all three species are borne in loose terminal clusters. The flower heads of *S. arvensis* are relatively large (often 3–5 cm across); those of the other two species are smaller (about 2 cm across). The fruits of all three species are parachuted, like those of dandelions.

Where to Find

All three sow-thistle species were introduced to North America from Europe and are well-known weeds, the perennial sow-thistle being considered one of the worst weeds of all. Each species occurs throughout Canada. Perennial sow-thistle is most common in Quebec, Ontario, and the Prairie Provinces, while the other two are prevalent in Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia. The sow-thistles' favourite haunts include gardens, cultivated fields, roadsides, and waste places.

How to Use

The young, tender leaves can be used raw in green salads or they can simply be steamed for a few minutes. We would suggest that you trim off the bristles at the edges of the leaves before using them, however. Try seasoning the leaves with herbs, dressings, or plain lemon juice. Most people find sow-thistle rather bitter in taste, similar to dandelion leaves. Some relish the bitter flavour, while others prefer to eliminate it by parboiling the leaves before using them. However, boiling should be brief—two or three minutes—and only a small amount of water should be used. The young leaves make good soups and casseroles and can also be used in combination with other vegetables or weeds, such as dandelion and stinging nettle. They are rich in minerals and high in vitamin C.

Suggested Recipes

Sow-Thistle Casserole, Manitoba Style

500 ml	young sow-thistle leaves	2 cups
	1 medium onion, chopped	
50 ml	butter *or* margarine	1/4 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	
250 g	Ukrainian garlic ring *or* Polish sausage, chopped	1/2 lb
125 ml	grated Parmesan cheese	1/2 cup

Wash sow-thistle leaves thoroughly but do not drain. Cut into small pieces and set aside. Sauté onion in butter *or* margarine until onion is brown. Add sow-thistle leaves and cook, covered, until tender (3–5 minutes). Add seasonings. Mix in sausage and place the mixture in a well-buttered casserole. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and bake at 190°C (375°F) for 15–20 minutes. Serve hot on toast or with cooked rice. Serves 2.

Sow-Thistle Soup, Prairie Special

1 L	young sow-thistle leaves	4 cups
45 ml	butter *or* margarine	3 tbsp
	1 clove garlic, minced	
5 ml	lemon juice *or* sour cream	1 tsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
500 ml	milk	2 cups
	2 hard-boiled eggs	

Wash sow-thistle leaves thoroughly but do not drain. Cut into small pieces and set aside. Melt butter *or* margarine in a saucepan. Add garlic and sow-thistle leaves, and stir for 2–3 minutes over moderate heat. Cover and cook over low heat until very tender (10–15 minutes). Press mixture through a sieve and return to saucepan. Add lemon juice *or* sour cream, seasonings and milk. Heat mixture thoroughly. Garnish with quartered hard-boiled eggs and serve immediately. Serves 3–4.
Note: Sour cream instead of lemon juice will make a richer soup and will moderate the slight bitterness of sow-thistle.

More for Your Interest

Sow-thistle seeds are a favourite food of goldfinches and other small songbirds. The leaves are an excellent, healthful forage for animals, especially swine and rabbits.

The ancient Romans used the leaves as a salad herb and vegetable. Pliny recorded that the hero Theseus dined off sow-thistles before going out to capture the terrible bull that was wreaking havoc on the Plain of Marathon. He presented the beast to Athene, Goddess of wisdom, who had counselled him to use the strength-giving greens. The famous herbalist, Culpeper, notes that sow-thistle makes an excellent cosmetic wash for women to "clear the skin and give it lustre". The Romans were said to have introduced sow-thistle to England; the earliest records of its existence in Britain reveal that it occurred around the sites of early Roman forts.

Common Dandelion

(Aster or Composite Family)

Other Names
Blowball, lion's tooth, yellow gowan, priest's crown, wet-a-bed, *pissenlit*.

How to Recognize
Dandelion is a well-known weed all over the world. It is a perennial with a long, thick, brown-skinned taproot, a basal rosette of bright-green sharply lobed leaves, and several to many golden-yellow flower heads on individual stalks. The hollow stems when broken discharge a white, milky juice. Children everywhere love the round, fluffy seedheads, from which small parachuted seeds are dislodged with the slightest breath. Do not confuse the common dandelion with the taller, coarser cat's-ear dandelion, or spotted cat's ear (*Hypochaeris radicata* L.), which is hairy and very bitter.

Where to Find
Dandelion is a common weed of field, roadside, lawn, and garden. A native of Europe, it is now widespread in North America and most of the world. Its favourite habitats are moist, grassy places and recently disturbed sites. It occurs from sea-level to subalpine elevations. The golden blooms are truly beautiful, their bright hue adding a cheering splash of colour to roadsides and meadows during spring and early summer.

How to Use
You may be surprised to learn that dandelion is a well-known green vegetable in many parts of the world. It is grown commercially in France and is often compared to endive in flavour. The leaves should be harvested in early spring while they are still young and tender; the older leaves are decidedly bitter and tough. You can use the leaves in salads or cook them as a potherb. To remove the bitterness, change the water once or twice in cooking. As with chicory, the leaves may be blanched by covering them during their rapid growth and then used in salads. In our opinion, though, the best salad is made from cold, cooked leaves that are chilled thoroughly, chopped, and served with a favourite dressing. For winter use, dandelion leaves can be salted and fermented like sauerkraut.

Dandelion roots can also be eaten after being cooked in a couple of changes of water. Try them hot with salt, butter, and lemon juice or yoghurt, or cold as a salad ingredient. They can be dug in spring or fall. As in Jerusalem artichokes their carbohydrate is in the form of a complex sugar known as inulin. They are put to best use, however, not as a vegetable but as a beverage. Dried, roasted, and ground, they make a most acceptable coffee substitute, with neither the caffeine nor the high price tag. The flowers can be made into an excellent wine, and the whole plants can be brewed as a beer. To

***Taraxacum officinale* L.**
(Asteraceae or Compositae)

obtain a good recipe for this last beverage, we refer the reader to Audrey Wynne Hatfield's excellent book *How to Enjoy Your Weeds*.

There are many people on this continent who are prejudiced against dandelions, both as a flower and as a vegetable. They are not only one of the most beautiful springtime flowers, but are more nutritious than many of our prized vegetables. The greens are high in iron, calcium, phosphorus, and potassium, and are one of the best sources of copper known. They are also high in vitamin A. Why not give them a try? Simply harvest them from your own front lawn.

Suggested Recipes

Adam's Winter Salad

1 L	young dandelion leaves, washed	4 cups
30 ml	lemon juice	2 tbsp
30 ml	sunflower oil	2 tbsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
	dash of garlic salt (optional)	

Tear leaves into bite-size pieces. Place in a bowl and add lemon juice, sunflower oil, seasonings, and garlic salt if desired. Chill for one hour, and serve with meat, shrimp, or crab. Serves 4.

Dandelions in Sour Cream

Gather 1 L (4 cups) young, tender leaves. Cover with water, bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 10 minutes, covered. Drain. (Those who do not relish the bitter taste should change the water once or twice.) Chill and serve with butter and sour cream. Bacon *or* ham fried with onion may be added over top. Serves 4.

Dandelion Coffee

Dig dandelion roots in spring or fall, cut into small pieces, and roast them at 120°C (250°F) for about 2 hours, until they are brown, dry, and brittle. Grind into a powder in a coffee grinder or blender. Use about 25 ml (1½ tbsp) per 250 ml (1 cup), and steep in a teapot or percolate. It is a good idea to experiment with greater or lesser amounts until you arrive at the strength you most enjoy.

Oldtimer's Dandelion Wine

5–6 L	dandelion flowers (heads only)	4–5 qts
6 L	boiling water	5 qts
1.5 kg	white sugar	3 lbs
	2 lemons and 2 oranges, sliced	
250 ml	raisins	1 cup
8 g	1 package dry yeast	1/4 oz

Collect well-developed flowers in dry weather. Place in a crock, pour boiling water over them, and let stand for about 24 hours. Strain and add sugar and citrus fruits. Boil for 10 minutes, strain, and cool. Add the raisins and yeast. Let stand for 2–3 weeks. Strain, bottle, and cork. Do not cork tightly until fermentation is complete. Do not use screw-type bottle caps—they can cause explosions. Store in a cool, dark place for not less than 6 months. Wine should be golden clear before serving.

More for Your Interest

Dandelion is considered an excellent pasture feed, said to increase the milk flow of dairy cattle and improve the quality of their milk. Blooming early in the spring, it is also a valuable bee plant, furnishing both nectar for a bright, golden honey and pollen at a time when bees require a rich food for brood-rearing. Thus, the dandelion truly helps to give us a land flowing with milk and honey.

A tea made from dandelion roots or leaves is supposedly good for liver disorders and weak digestion, and for helping to combat anaemia. It has also been traditionally valued for its healing effect on skin eruptions and eczema, and as a mild laxative. Dandelion greens have the reputation of stimulating the kidneys—hence the name *wet-a-bed* and its French equivalent *pissenlit*. The more conventional name, *dandelion*, is a corruption of the French *dent de lion*, meaning "lion's tooth", referring to the plant's coarsely toothed leaf edges.

In Canada, dandelion seems to be better appreciated in the East than in the West. Some people in eastern Canada actually seed dandelion in with their lawns to add a splash of colour. Children can have fun with dandelions by cutting the stems in sections, splitting them at the ends, placing them in water, and watching them curl up into shiny ringlets.

Salsify and Goat's-Beards

(Aster or Composite Family)

Other Names

T. porrifolius is called salsify, true salsify, or purple salsify; *T. dubius* is called western goat's-beard or yellow salsify; and *T. pratensis* is known as meadow goat's-beard or yellow salsify. All these plants are also called osyter plant, oyster-root, vegetable oyster, Johnny-go-to-bed-at-noon, Joseph's flower, and star of Jerusalem.

How to Recognize

These are erect, hollow-stemmed biennials, with large, terminal, dandelion-like flowers, purple in the true salsify and yellow in the other two species. The stems, leaves, and roots exude a thick milky juice, or latex, when injured. All have long, fleshy taproots. The leaves are alternate, long, and tapering, with smooth margins and bases that clasp the stem. The flowers may be several centimetres across. The fruiting heads are large and globe-like, resembling those of dandelions, but much bigger. The parachutes on the fruits are large, stiff, and whitish or tawny. The true salsify is easily distinguished by its purple flowers. The other two differ from each other in a number of minor ways. For example, the stalk of *T. dubius* is inflated below the flower head; that of *T. pratensis* is not. The latter has crisp-margined leaves that taper abruptly into long, recurved tips; *T. dubius* leaves are neither crisped at the edges nor curled at the tips. The fruits of *T. pratensis* are about 2.5 cm long, those of *T. dubius* usually over 3 cm.

Tragopogon pratensis

***Tragopogon porrifolius* L. and *T. dubius* Scop. and *T. pratensis* L.**
(Asteraceae or Compositae)

Where to Find

All three species were introduced from Europe. The true salsify is a legitimate garden vegetable, now seldom used but often found locally as an escape in old gardens, orchards, and along roadsides. The yellow goat's-beards occur in every province except Newfoundland. *Tragopogon pratensis* is most common in eastern Canada. *T. dubius* is abundant in British Columbia and the Prairies, and is rapidly spreading in Ontario and Quebec.

How to Use

The fleshy, carrot-like taproots of these species make an excellent cooked vegetable, compared by some to oysters or salted fish in flavour, but in our opinion more like parsnips or burdock. They are best dug in summer or fall from the first-year plants; the roots of flowering individuals are decidedly pithy and tough, though still pleasant-tasting. The roots quickly discolour when peeled and cut, and they should therefore be cooked unpeeled or boiled immediately after peeling; soaking them in water with a little vinegar or ascorbic acid is also effective.

The young leaves are also edible. In fact, the basal leaves can be left intact when the roots are dug and cooked along with them. As with milkweed, the congealed latex from the stems makes a pleasant and novel chewing gum.

Salsify can sometimes be purchased in markets and can be ordered as a side dish in some French restaurants, usually at a hefty price. Why not plan a French meal and include salsify, or goat's-beard, in the menu? It will not cost you a cent if you dig it up yourself. These plants grow very well from seed. If you like the taste, you can reverse history and introduce them into your garden. Properly tended and cultivated, they need never get out of hand; just be sure to remove any flowering heads before they mature.

Suggested Recipes

Sautéed Salsify

500 ml	**salsify roots, washed and peeled**	**2 cups**
50 ml	**milk**	**1/4 cup**
	salt, pepper to taste	
125 ml	**breadcrumbs**	**1/2 cup**
30 ml	**butter**	**2 tbsp**

Dip salsify roots in milk, sprinkle with salt and pepper, roll in breadcrumbs, and sauté slowly in butter until golden brown. Serve as a side dish with *coq au vin* or your favourite French entrée. Serves 4.

Salsifis à blanc

375 ml	water	1 1/2 cups
10 ml	flour	2 tsp
5 ml	lemon juice	1 tsp
	pinch of salt	
250 ml	salsify roots, washed	1 cup
5 ml	brown sugar	1 tsp
50 ml	whipping cream	1/4 cup
	dash of nutmeg	

Mix together water, flour, lemon juice, and salt, and bring to a boil. Peel salsify and drop immediately into boiling liquid. Cook until tender (3–5 minutes). Drain and place in a serving dish. Mix together brown sugar and cream and pour over top. Sprinkle with nutmeg. Serves 2.

More for Your Interest

John Gerard summarizes the virtues of the salsifies in *The Herbal or General History of Plants:*

> The roots of Goats-beard boyled in wine and drunk, asswageth the paine and pricking stitches of the sides.
>
> The same boyled in water until they be tender, and buttered as parseneps and carrots, are a most pleasant and wholsome meate, in delicate taste farre surpassing either Parsenep or Carrot: which meate procures appetite, warmeth the stomacke, prevaileth greatly in consumptions, and strengthneth those that have been sicke of a long lingring disease.

Salsify flowers are very sensitive to light and weather. If you come across a patch on a sunny morning, you will notice that all the flowers are facing the same direction—towards the sun. Around noon, however, they all close up until the next day. If it is raining or foggy they remain closed the entire day.

Comfrey

(Borage Family)

Other Names
Known in England by such names as knitbone, Abraham, Isaac and Joseph, church bells, coffee flower, gooseberry-pie, and snake.

How to Recognize
Once you have identified it, this robust herb is difficult to forget. It is a perennial, often over 1 m high, with a deep-seated, branching taproot, and many large, oval to ellipse-shaped, bluish-green leaves. The leaf veins are prominent, and the leaves and stems are covered with stiff hairs that make them fuzzy or almost prickly and can cause itching. The basal leaves sometimes attain a length of half a metre or more, in good locations. The stem leaves decrease in size towards the top of the plant. The flowers are small, cream to purplish, and tubular, in tight clusters. The fruits are brownish black.

Where to Find
This native of Europe has escaped from cultivation and is well established in back-yard gardens and damp meadows and along roadsides throughout much of North America, especially in the East. Many unsuspecting gardeners have innocently planted a single root of it for interest's sake, only to find in a year or two that it has spread everywhere. Once established, it is virtually impossible to remove because a new plant will grow from the minutest fragment of root. One might just as well give in and eat it!

How to Use

The fuzziness of the leaves makes them undesirable as a salad vegetable. However, the leaves are very satisfactory potherbs, especially when cooked with spinach or other greens. The older leaves are not as tender, but are said to have more flavour than the younger ones. The blanched stalks make an agreeable asparagus substitute. Comfrey leaves and roots also make a relaxing tea, known for its medicinal value.

Suggested Recipes

Comfrey Fritters (*Schwarzwurz*, a traditional Teutonic dish)

250 ml	all-purpose flour	1 cup
2 ml	salt	1/2 tsp
3 ml	baking powder	3/4 tsp
	few grains pepper	
125 ml	milk	1/2 cup
	2 eggs, well beaten	
	12 medium-size comfrey leaves with stems intact, washed	
500 ml	oil (for deep frying)	2 cups

Mix thoroughly all ingredients except comfrey leaves and oil. Dip leaves into batter, making sure they are completely coated. Deep-fry in oil at 190°C (375°F) for not more than 2 minutes. The soft, slightly glutinous leaves contrast pleasingly with the crisp golden batter. For a more succulent fritter, stick 2 or 3 comfrey leaves together before dipping in the batter. Serves 3–4.

Comfrey Delight

750 ml	comfrey leaves, washed and finely chopped	3 cups
50 ml	grated carrot	1/4 cup
	1 medium leek, finely chopped	
15 ml	mint leaves, chopped	1 tbsp
15 ml	sweet cicely *or* tarragon leaves, chopped	1 tbsp
	juice and grated rind of 1 lemon	
125 ml	water	1/2 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	
1 L	tomato juice	4 cups

Simmer all the ingredients except tomato juice together until soft, about 5 minutes. Then purée in the blender or press through a sieve. Add purée to tomato juice and mix thoroughly. Chill and serve with ice and a slice of lemon or lime. Serves 6.

Comfrey Greens

2 L	comfrey leaves, washed	8 cups
75 ml	boiling water	1/3 cup
15 ml	lemon juice *or* vinegar	1 tbsp
15 ml	softened butter *or* yoghurt *or* sour cream	1 tbsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
	dash of nutmeg	

Cut leaves into thin strips. Place in a saucepan with water, bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 3 minutes, or until tender. Drain. Add other ingredients and sprinkle with nutmeg. Serves 4–5.

Comfy Comfrey Tea

Wash about four medium-size comfrey leaves *or* four 10-cm long (4-in.) pieces of root about the thickness of your finger. Cut into strips and place in a warmed teapot with about 12 fresh spearmint leaves *or* 5 ml (1 tsp) dried mint tea. Pour in about 750 ml (3 cups) boiling water and allow to steep for half an hour, or until the tea is slightly coloured. Reheat if necessary. Flavour with lemon and sweeten with honey if desired.

More for Your Interest

Comfrey was a favourite bone-setter of medieval herbalists, hence the name *knitbone*. The root was dug in spring, grated, and plastered over a broken or cracked limb. Within a short time the mash would set as solid as wood, allowing the break to heal. The mashed root was also valued as an external poultice for insect bites, sprains, bruises, severe cuts, boils, ulcers, sore joints, and other such afflictions. A decoction of the root in water or wine was drunk to relieve haemorrhaging, lung troubles, coughing and sinus congestion, and kidney problems, and to combat malignancy.

European beekeepers have long valued comfrey as an excellent honey plant. It is often cultivated around beehives to provide nectar for the bees.

If you feel you have an excess of comfrey around your garden, try using a few leaves to line your kitchen compost-container; they help prevent vegetable refuse from smelling and make emptying a breeze.

Wild Mustards

(Mustard Family)

Other Names

Various wild mustards are known as field mustard, Indian mustard, bird rape, wild turnip, rutabaga, black mustard, and white mustard.

How to Recognize

Mustards, which are relatives of cabbage, radish, turnip, and a number of other garden vegetables, are familiar weeds all over the world. Five species of wild mustard are widely distributed in Canada, often becoming so weedy that they take over large fields and seriously affect crops. All the closely related species are equally edible.

All are annuals, with rather slender, erect, widely branching stems covered by stiff hairs, and in Canada reach a height of up to 2 m. (They grow much taller in California.) The leaves are alternate and also hairy, particularly along the veins. The lower leaves are stalked and deeply divided into a large terminal segment and a few lateral lobes. The upper leaves are stalkless, coarsely toothed, and stiffly hairy to touch. The flowers, pale to deep yellow, are rather showy, up to 1.5 cm across, and, typical of the mustard family, each has 4 petals and 4 green sepals, arranged in the shape of a cross. After the petals fall off, slender seedpods develop with minute dark-coloured pungent seeds.

Brassica kaber

***Brassica* species**
(Brassicaceae or Cruciferae)

Where to Find
Mustards occur in agricultural areas of all provinces, on cultivated lands, in waste places, grain fields, gardens, railway yards, and along roadsides. They are considered among the fastest spreading weeds in Canada.

The following species of mustard occur in Canada:

Brassica kaber (DC.) L. C. Wheeler
(wild mustard or field mustard)
A native of Europe, it occurs in all provinces, with the greatest abundance in western Canada. (Also known as *Sinapis arvensis* L.)

Brassica juncea (L.) Coss.
(Indian mustard or Chinese mustard)
A native of Asia, it occurs in all provinces, and is especially abundant in western Canada.

Brassica campestris L.
(bird rape, wild turnip, or rutabaga)
A native of Europe, it is found in all provinces, but is most abundant in eastern Canada.

Brassica nigra (L.) Koch.
(black mustard)
A native of Europe, it occurs in all provinces, but is not as common as the other species.

Brassica hirta Moench
(white mustard)
A native of Europe, it occurs in all provinces except possibly Newfoundland. (Also known as *B. alba* Boiss. or *Sinapis alba* L.)

How to Use
The young leaves are good as potherbs, and can be made into tasty soups, sauces, and casseroles. They can also be used raw as a salad ingredient. The seeds can be used in pickling and for preparing table mustard. This popular companion of ham, hot dogs, and other meats is made commercially from the seeds of plants in this genus. You can make mustard easily by finely grinding wild mustard seeds and mixing them with vinegar to make a thick sauce or paste. Adding vegetable oil or horseradish will improve the taste. Mustard leaves are rich in such minerals as calcium, phosphorus, and potassium, and in vitamin A. The seeds are often fed to cage birds and are a favourite food of finches and larks. It should be noted, however, that mustard seed in large quantities has caused poisoning in livestock, and should therefore be used only in moderation.

Smoked Salmon and Green Mustard Salad, Cowichan Style

500 g	smoked salmon (cooked fresh salmon may be substituted)	1 lb
125 ml	sour cream	1/2 cup
30 ml	chopped green onion	2 tbsp
250 ml	fresh, young, wild mustard leaves, washed and chopped	1 cup
2 ml	celery salt	1/2 tsp
	salt, pepper to taste	

Cut salmon into bite-size pieces, removing any bones. Toss with sour cream, green onion, mustard leaves, and seasonings. Serve cold as a main-course salad. Serves 2–3.
Note: Cowichan is a district located on the southeastern coast of Vancouver Island, famous for its salmon fishing.

Tuna and Green Mustard Casserole

375 ml	mustard leaves, washed and finely chopped	1 1/2 cups
250 ml	chunk-style tuna	1 cup
125 ml	salted cashew nuts	1/2 cup
50 ml	minced onion	1/4 cup
	1 can condensed cream of mushroom soup	
50 ml	water	1/4 cup
	1 large can chow mein noodles	
	salt, pepper to taste	

Combine mustard leaves, tuna, nuts, onion, soup, water, and half the noodles. Mix well and add seasonings. Place mixture in a greased casserole, cover, and cook for 25 minutes at 180°C (350°F). Top with remaining noodles and serve hot. Serves 4.

Rice with Green Mustard, Spanish Style

	6 strips bacon, diced	
	1 medium onion, sliced	
375 ml	young mustard leaves, washed and chopped	1 1/2 cups
	1 large green pepper, chopped	
375 ml	cooked rice	1 1/2 cups
250 ml	canned tomatoes	1 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	

Fry bacon at moderate heat until crisp. Add onion, mustard leaves, green pepper, and rice. Fry in bacon fat until browned. Add tomatoes and seasonings. Mix well. Cover and cook over low heat for 10–15 minutes. Serve hot. Serves 4.

More for Your Interest

The genus *Brassica* contains many of our important vegetables: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, rape, rutabaga, and turnip, to name a few. These are used all over the world, and all are characterized by a slightly hot, peppery flavour indicating the presence of mustard oils.

The wild bird-rape *(B. campestris)* is considered a predecessor of the cultivated turnip, rape, and rutabaga. The Indian mustard *(B. juncea)* is extensively cultivated in India, central Africa, and southern Russia as a substitute for olive oil. Culinary mustard is derived from the powdered seeds of Indian mustard or black mustard *(B. nigra)*. The latter is widely cultivated in Europe and has been used as a potherb and condiment for centuries. White mustard *(B. alba)* is commonly grown in China, where the leaves are pickled in winter or used in spring as a potherb. In the past, white mustard was cultivated in Germany and England as well. The young leaves, cut close to the ground, were a highly prized salad vegetable.

Shepherd's Purse

(Mustard or Crucifer Family)

Other Names
Lady's purse, pick-pocket, pepper and salt.

How to Recognize
This fast-growing annual has a characteristic rosette, or circle, of basal leaves that are usually deeply toothed. The stems are simple or branching, with scattered alternate leaves, clasping, pointed, and much smaller than the basal ones. The flowers are small and white, in terminal clusters that become elongated as the fruiting capsules ripen. The capsules themselves are flat and triangular to heart-shaped—a feature that makes the plant easy to identify, and that inspired the traditional name, shepherd's purse.

Where to Find
This highly adaptable weed is found in a variety of habitats throughout North America, including gardens, roadsides, waste places, and meadows, from sea-level to subalpine elevations.

How to Use
The leaves taste much like cabbage, only a little spicier. They can be eaten raw, simmered in a little water, or stir-fried Chinese style. Soaking the leaves overnight in water before using them eliminates some of the sharp taste. They are best when mixed with other foods in soups, salads, and casseroles.

The mature seedpods, dried and powdered, make an excellent seasoning for winter soups. The seeds can actually be used as meal for making bread, if enough can be harvested.

***Capsella bursa-pastoris* (L.) Medic.**
(Brassicaceae or Cruciferae)

Suggested Recipes

Shepherd's Purse Coleslaw

500 ml	young washed shepherd's purse leaves, shredded if desired	2 cups
125 ml	diced apple	1/2 cup
15 ml	chopped parsley	1 tbsp
15 ml	lemon juice	1 tbsp
125 ml	sour cream	1/2 cup
1 ml	salt	1/4 tsp
5 ml	sugar	1 tsp
1 ml	freshly ground white pepper	1/4 tsp
2 ml	celery seed	1/2 tsp

Toss shepherd's purse leaves, apple, and parsley. Combine remaining ingredients and add to first mixture. Toss thoroughly. Chill and serve. Serves 2–3.

Shepherd's Purse Green Soup

1 L	chicken *or* beef *or* vegetable broth	4 cups
5 ml	fresh ginger, chopped	1 tsp
5 ml	soy sauce	1 tsp
5 ml	peanut oil	1 tsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
1 ml	monosodium glutamate (optional)	1/4 tsp
1 L	young shepherd's purse leaves, washed and sliced diagonally	4 cups

Bring broth to boil and add ginger, soy sauce, peanut oil, seasonings, and monosodium glutamate if desired. Add shepherd's purse leaves to broth. Cover and simmer for 5–10 minutes. Serve hot with your favourite Chinese dishes. Serves 3–4.

Shepherd's Purse Lunch

250 ml	shepherd's purse leaves, washed and chopped	1 cup
250 ml	diced cucumber	1 cup
500 ml	cottage cheese	2 cups
	paprika	
	chopped parsley	

Combine shepherd's purse leaves, cucumber, and cottage cheese. Garnish with paprika and chopped parsley. Serve with toast or crackers—a great light lunch. Serves 4.

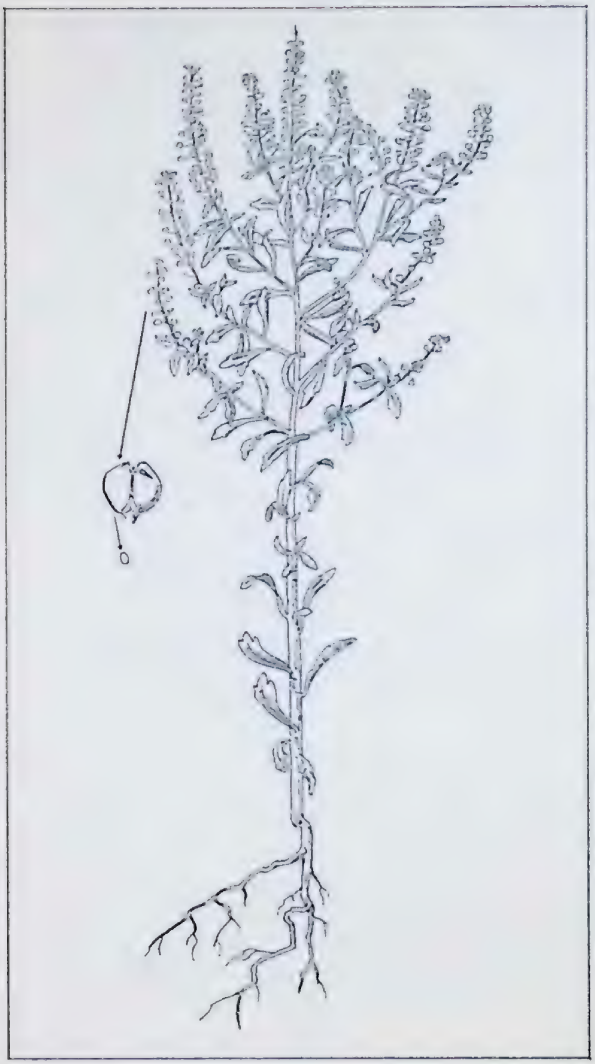
Shepherd's Purse Pepper

Collect and dry the fruiting stems of shepherd's purse in summer and fall. Strip off the seedpods, and use them powdered or whole as a seasoning for vegetable soups and other dishes. They may also be mixed with peppergrass pods (*Lepidium* species).

More for Your Interest

In the early nineteenth century, the leaves were cultivated and sold in the markets of Philadelphia and other towns of eastern North America. They are still popular in the marketplaces of China. Under cultivation, the leaves become very large and succulent compared to those of their wild counterparts.

Shepherd's purse seeds are a good supplemental food for most cage birds. The leaves make an excellent poultice for minor cuts, and have been used traditionally by herbalists in a decoction or as a poultice to stop minor surface bleeding.



Common Peppergrass

(Mustard Family)

Other Names
Green-flowered peppergrass, peppercress.

How to Recognize
Peppergrass is an annual, with a single stem that is freely branching and bushy, often reaching a height of half a metre or more. The young plants frequently survive the winter as a flat rosette of leaves. The individual leaves are deeply cut, or toothed, and have the characteristic flavour of cress. The stem leaves are rather small, alternate, and distinctly toothed or deeply divided. The flowers are minute and whitish, arranged in long, slender terminal clusters. They are four-petalled or, in some cases, without petals. The seedpods are small, flat, and circular or nearly so, each with a notch at the tip.

A number of peppergrass species occur in Canada and most are difficult to distinguish from the common peppergrass. All are edible and can be used the same way. One species, well known to many, is the field peppergrass [*Lepidium campestre* (L.) R. Br.]. Introduced from Europe, where it was used as a substitute for watercress, it is very abundant in some parts of eastern Canada and in British Columbia.

***Lepidium densiflorum* Schrad.**
(Brassicaceae or Cruciferae)

Where to Find

This weed is native to North America and Europe, and has been introduced in many parts of the world. It is common in Canada, occurring in all provinces, but is more abundant in western Canada. Cultivated fields, waste places, gardens, and roadsides are its most common habitats.

How to Use

In spring the fast-growing, tender shoots are a very good substitute for zesty watercress; they are pleasantly peppery and very palatable. The pods and seeds have a stronger taste. Mixed with vinegar and salt, they make an interesting addition to meats and salads. You should collect them just as they mature, towards the end of the growing season, and dry them for year-round use (see instructions for shepherd's purse, p. 80). Peppergrass is generally preferred raw, but a small handful of young shoots or leaves is a stimulating addition to soups, sauces, and casseroles. The fresh leaves are excellent in salads, sandwiches, and hors-d'oeuvres. They are rich in minerals and vitamins, especially vitamin C.

Suggested Recipes

Peppergrass Omelette

	4 eggs	
125 ml	young, tender peppergrass shoots, washed and finely chopped	1/2 cup
125 ml	milk	1/2 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	
15 ml	butter	1 tbsp
50 ml	grated Cheddar cheese	1/4 cup

Beat eggs. Add peppergrass shoots, milk, and seasonings. Melt butter in a heavy skillet; pour in egg mixture. When eggs begin to set, add cheese. Cook until eggs set. Serve hot with toast. Serves 2.

Peppergrass Tartar Sauce

50 ml	**young peppergrass shoots, washed and finely chopped**	**1/4 cup**
250 ml	**mayonnaise**	**1 cup**
15 ml	**chopped capers**	**1 tbsp**
15 ml	**chopped olives**	**1 tbsp**
15 ml	**chopped sweet pickles**	**1 tbsp**
	salt, pepper to taste	

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Serve with fish, or spread on cheese or meat sandwiches.

More for Your Interest

Peppergrass is a close relative of dittander, or "poor man's pepper" *(Lepidium latifolium* L.), whose hot, pungent root was gathered wild and occasionally cultivated in England, where it was used as a condiment before pepper and horseradish became popular. Dittander leaves were also used as a cress for salads and sauces throughout Europe, North Africa, and central and northern Asia.

The true cress *(L. sativum* L.) is also closely related. It is thought to be a native of the Middle East, and was eaten by the Persians as early as 400 B.C. It spread from Persia to India, Syria, Greece, Egypt, and Abyssinia, and has been cultivated in England as a salad herb since 1548.

A number of *Lepidium* species were used in the past by seamen as antiscorbutics, for the prevention of scurvy.

Watercress

(Mustard or Crucifer Family)

Other Names
Cress, water-grass; tang tongues.

How to Recognize
This well-known salad plant is a hardy, creeping perennial herb found in or around running water. The stems, up to half a metre long, are hollow, capable of floating, and freely rooting at the nodes to form large clumps or mats. White nodules often show on the upper roots. The leaves are bright green and glossy, up to 10 cm long and compound, with 3 to 9 roundish segments, the terminal one being the largest. The flowers are small and white, in clusters at the end of the stems. They develop needle-like upright seedpods, characteristic of many of the mustard family. The entire plant has the familiar peppery taste of cabbage, radishes, and other mustards.

Where to Find
This European plant has been introduced throughout much of North America, where it often becomes thoroughly established in quiet streams and shallow fresh water. It does not do well in stagnant water or cold lakes. Watercress is common throughout Canada, growing wild in every province, even in densely populated areas along the banks of drainage ditches, creeks, and road culverts.

***Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum* (L.) Schinz & Thell.**
(Brassicaceae or Cruciferae)

How to Use

The juicy shoots and tender leaves of watercress are good both cooked and raw. Generally it is more popular in the raw form, but when boiled with other vegetables it adds a zesty, peppery flavour. It is also a well-known addition to sandwiches and a good accompaniment to eggs, fish, cheese, onion, and other salad and sandwich ingredients. Here are a few new and old ways to serve watercress.

Warning: Collect watercress from unpolluted water only, since the plant can accumulate harmful residues. The best precaution is to soak the leaves for half an hour in water in which a Halazone tablet has been dissolved. (The tablet will release purifying chlorine gas and can be obtained from drugstores.) Remember also that the poisonous water hemlock (*Cicuta* species) grows in similar habitats, and should not be confused with watercress. Water hemlock is a much taller plant with erect stems, dissected leaves with pointed leaflets, and flowers that resemble those of a carrot.

Suggested Recipes

Savory Watercress Canapé

250 ml	watercress, washed and chopped	1 cup
125 ml	tuna	1/2 cup
	1 hard-boiled egg, chopped	
	6 anchovy fillets, chopped	
5 ml	Worcestershire sauce	1 tsp
15 ml	Russian dressing *or* mayonnaise *or* chili sauce	1 tbsp
	4 slices bread	
20 ml	butter *or* margarine	4 tsp

Blend first six ingredients with a fork and set aside. Spread both sides of bread with butter *or* margarine and fry on each side over moderate heat until golden brown. Spread mixture over fried bread. Cut each slice into four pieces and serve immediately.

Hearty Watercress Canapé

250 ml	watercress, washed and chopped	1 cup
	1 medium tomato, peeled and chopped	
15 ml	mayonnaise	1 tbsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
	4 slices pumpernickel *or* dark rye bread, toasted	
10 ml	butter *or* margarine	2 tsp

Blend first four ingredients with a fork. Spread toast with butter *or* margarine and watercress mixture. Cut each slice into four pieces and serve immediately.

Seafood Canapé

250 ml	cooked crabmeat (fresh or canned)	1 cup
1 ml	celery salt	1/4 tsp
15 ml	chili sauce	1 tbsp
5 ml	chopped pimiento	1 tsp
	4 slices French bread, toasted	
10 ml	butter *or* margarine	2 tsp
	watercress, washed	

Blend first four ingredients with a fork. Spread toast with butter *or* margarine and crab mixture. Garnish with watercress and serve immediately.

Note: The above recipes can also be used in sandwiches. We suggest that you add chopped watercress to other sandwich fillings, such as chopped ham, hard-boiled egg, red or black caviar, smoked salmon, chopped lobster, anchovy paste, or cheese.

Cress Salad, French Style

500 ml	watercress, washed	2 cups
	2 green onions	
	2 large tomatoes	
	4 slices crisp, cooked bacon	
125 ml	croutons	1/2 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	
	French dressing	

Cut first four ingredients into small pieces and combine. Add croutons and seasonings, and toss. Serve with French dressing. Serves 4.

Watercress Soup

250 ml	watercress, washed	1 cup
500 ml	milk	2 cups
	salt, pepper to taste	
30 ml	sour cream	2 tbsp
125 ml	croutons	1/2 cup
	sprigs of fresh watercress, washed, for garnish	

Liquefy watercress in a blender and set aside. Heat milk and add seasonings. Add watercress to hot milk and simmer for 3 minutes. Just before serving, add sour cream. Blend until smooth and reheat. Add croutons and garnish with watercress. Serve immediately. Serves 3–4.

Scrambled Eggs with Watercress, English Style

15 ml	butter *or* margarine	1 tbsp
	2 eggs	
30 ml	milk	2 tbsp
125 ml	watercress, washed and chopped	1/2 cup
	2 slices cooked, crumbled bacon (optional)	
	salt, pepper to taste	

Melt butter or margarine in a frying pan. Beat eggs with milk and pour into pan. Add remaining ingredients and stir with fork until cooked but still soft. Serve immediately. Serves 1–2.

Watercress Sandwiches

	12 large sprigs watercress, washed and finely chopped	
	2 hard-boiled eggs, finely chopped	
30 ml	mayonnaise	2 tbsp
2 ml	milk	1/2 tsp
	6 (*or* 12) slices rye bread, buttered	

Blend all ingredients, except bread, with a fork. Spread over bread to make 6 open-face sandwiches or, if preferred, cover each with another slice of bread to make closed sandwiches. Serve with soup.

More for Your Interest

The history of watercress is very old and most interesting. It is known that the plant was used as long as 5,000 years ago. The Spartans of Greece ate it in great quantity with bread; it was said to make them quick-witted and decisive. The Persians and the Muhammadans of western India also valued it. In Roman times watercress was prescribed as a cure for insanity. Today it is widely cultivated in many parts of the world, especially in China. You can easily purchase the seeds and establish your own patch if you have a damp, shady spot in your garden. The surplus harvest could be supplied to the local markets, as watercress is in constant demand for salads and sandwiches.

Watercress is an excellent source of vitamins A, B, C, E, and G, and is also rich in such minerals as iron and phosphorus. It contains over twice the amount of calcium as an equivalent quantity of spinach.

Common Hedge Mustard

(Mustard Family)

Other Names
Bank cress, crambling rocket.

How to Recognize
This hedge mustard is a coarse, branching annual up to 1 m tall. The leaves are deeply divided: the lower and middle ones are stalked and have 2 to 4 pointed lobes on each side and a large, triangular terminal lobe. The upper ones are stalkless and much reduced, with 4 to 6 very narrow lobes. The basal leaves die off by flowering time. The flowers, in elongated terminal branching clusters, are small, yellow, and four-petalled like the other mustards. The seedpods are slender and tightly appressed to the flowering stems. The seeds are small, yellow-brown, and oblong.

Two related species should also be mentioned, since they can be used in the same way as *S. officinale*. The tall hedge mustard (*S. loeselii* L.) is similar in appearance, but has longer seedpods that spread outwards rather than clasping the flowering stems. The tumble mustard (*S altissimum* L.) is a tall, bushy plant that breaks at the base at maturity and is blown about by the wind.

The leaves are deeply and coarsely lobed but the divisions are more even; the terminal lobe is no larger than the lateral ones and is not triangular. The seedpods are long and spreading, like those of the tall hedge mustard.

Where to Find

All three hedge mustards originated in Europe and are now widely distributed in North America. In Canada the common hedge mustard occurs in the eastern provinces and in British Columbia. The tall hedge mustard is found in all provinces from Quebec westwards, and is a particular nuisance in parts of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. It spreads rapidly and may soon be a problem in other provinces. The tumble mustard occurs in all provinces, being most abundant on the open prairies of the West. All grow in grasslands, pastures, grainfields, gardens, and waste places, and along roadsides and railway embankments.

How to Use

The hedge mustards are considered to be good-quality potherbs, providing that only the young, tender leaves are used before the flowers appear. The leaves at this stage are a welcome addition to salads, and will also improve the taste of many sauces, soups, and casseroles.

Suggested Recipes

Devilled Eggs with Hedge Mustard

250 ml	young hedge mustard leaves, washed and chopped	1 cup
	6 hard-boiled eggs, finely chopped	
45 ml	mayonnaise	3 tbsp
30 ml	chopped olives	2 tbsp
15 ml	chopped green onion	1 tbsp
30 ml	butter *or* margarine	2 tbsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
	dash of paprika	

Blend all ingredients with a fork and use as a filling for sandwiches or as a spread for crackers.

Atlantic Cod Casserole

125 ml	saltine cracker crumbs	1/2 cup
5 ml	softened butter (first amount)	1 tsp
45 ml	butter (second amount)	3 tbsp
45 ml	flour	3 tbsp
250 ml	milk	1 cup
250 ml	Cheddar cheese, shredded	1 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	
500 ml	cooked cod, flaked and boned	2 cups
250 ml	young hedge mustard leaves, washed and chopped	1 cup

Combine cracker crumbs with butter (first amount) and set aside. Melt butter (second amount) in saucepan and blend in flour, stirring constantly for 3 minutes. Add milk slowly and stir until thick. Remove from heat. Add Cheddar cheese and seasonings, stir till cheese is melted, and set aside. Place fish in a greased casserole and cover with mustard leaves. Pour sauce over leaves and top with buttered cracker crumbs. Bake at 180°C (350°F) until crumbs are browned. Serve hot. Serves 4.

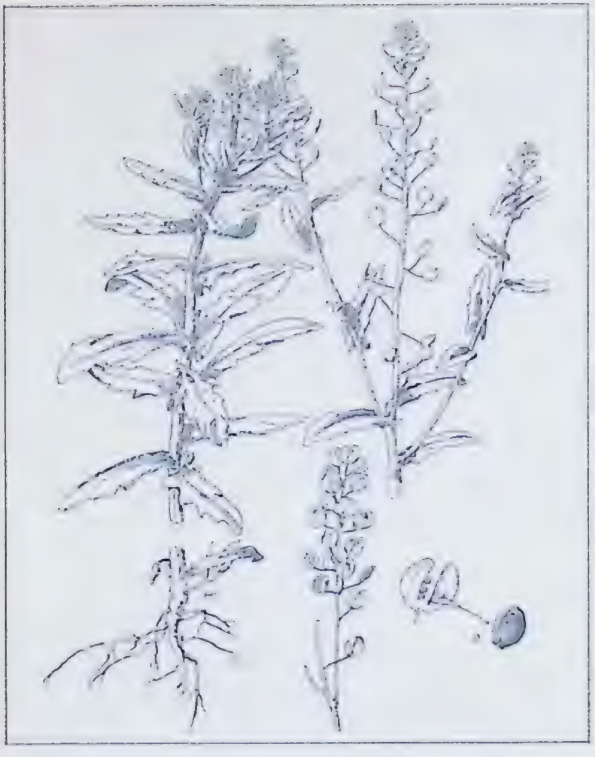
Hedge Mustard Chop Suey

30 ml	vegetable oil	2 tbsp
250 ml	cooked pork *or* veal, chopped	1 cup
	2 sliced onions	
500 ml	young hedge mustard leaves, washed and chopped	2 cups
250 ml	sliced celery	1 cup
250 ml	sliced fresh mushrooms	1 cup
250 ml	chicken *or* beef broth	1 cup
125 ml	uncooked rice	1/2 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	

Heat oil in a heavy skillet. Add the meat and onions, and fry until golden brown. Add mustard leaves, celery, and mushrooms, and cook for 5 minutes. Add broth, uncooked rice, and seasonings. Cover and simmer until the rice is tender (25–30 minutes). Serve hot. Serves 4–6.

More for Your Interest

Hedge mustard leaves are still used as greens, especially in sauces and salads, by rural people in Britain. A close relative, known as garlicwort or sauce-alone (*Sisymbrium alliaria* Scop.), is even more important in making sauces. As the name implies, it has a strong garlic odour and was used in a sauce for salted fish and meats as far back as the Middle Ages. In Wales it is frequently fried with bacon or herring, and is sometimes eaten as a salad green. In Germany it is called *sasskraut* and is often used in spring salads.



Pennycress

(Mustard Family)

Other Names
Stinkweed, fanweed, French weed mustard.

How to Recognize
This is either an annual or a winter annual, multiplying by seeds. The stems are erect, smooth or nearly so, simple or branched above, and sometimes over half a metre high. The leaves are alternate and smooth, with irregularly toothed edges. The basal leaves soon wither as the plants mature. The flowers are white and four-petalled. They are replaced by strongly flattened, almost circular pods with a characteristic narrow notch on the top. Pennycress resembles its relative peppergrass in having white flowers and flattened, notched seedpods. However, the flowers and seedpods are larger than those of peppergrass, and the pods more deeply notched.

Pennycress is known to many as stinkweed, and can be easily identified by its characteristic rank smell. The easiest test is to crush the young shoots or leaves in your hand: you will soon find out why it is called "stinkweed". Mature plants (after flowering) do not display the same degree of aromatic potency. We have purposely called the plant pennycress, since quite a few other species are known as stinkweeds.

Where to Find

One of the earliest Eurasian weeds introduced to the American continent, pennycress has become very abundant in many areas. In Canada it is known in every province, being particularly troublesome in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In the West its distribution extends to moderate elevations in the mountains. It commonly grows in grainfields, hayfields, gardens, and waste places.

How to Use

Pennycress can be used in the same way as its relative the common peppergrass. In our opinion, it is rather bitter and too aromatic. However, some people may acquire a taste for it. When trying it for the first time, use a very small amount as an addition to other potherbs or simply as a flavouring herb for hot dishes or sauces.

Suggested Recipes

Pennycress Spread for Sandwiches

50 ml	young pennycress shoots, washed and finely chopped	1/4 cup
250 ml	soft margarine	1 cup
50 ml	sour cream	1/4 cup
	dash of paprika	
	salt to taste	

Blend all ingredients and use as a spread on bologna, ham, Swiss cheese, or salami sandwiches. Cover and store in the refrigerator.

Pennycress "Horseradish" Spread

50 ml	young pennycress shoots, washed and finely chopped	1/4 cup
125 ml	soft margarine	1/2 cup
125 ml	mayonnaise	1/2 cup
30 ml	sweet-pickle relish	2 tbsp
2 ml	vinegar	1/2 tsp
	salt, pepper to taste	

Blend all ingredients and use as a spread on beef, fish, or ham sandwiches. Cover and store in the refrigerator.

Sooke Sandwich with Pennycress

30 ml	young pennycress shoots, washed and finely chopped	2 tbsp
50 ml	chopped onion	1/4 cup
30 ml	chopped pimiento	2 tbsp
30 ml	butter *or* margarine (first amount)	2 tbsp
500 ml	cooked crabmeat (fresh or canned)	2 cups
	salt, pepper to taste	
20 ml	butter *or* margarine (second amount)	4 tsp
	8 slices bread	
	4 slices Canadian processed cheese	

Sauté pennycress, onion, and pimiento in butter *or* margarine (first amount). Add crabmeat and seasonings, and heat thoroughly. Spread butter *or* margarine (second amount) on one side of bread and pile mixture on unbuttered side of 4 slices only. Top with a slice of cheese. Cover with unbuttered side of 4 remaining slices and grill on each side until golden brown. Serves 4.
Note: Sooke is a district near Victoria, British Columbia, famous for its seafood.

More for Your Interest
Dairy cattle that graze on pennycress may produce tainted milk and cream. Pennycress can also flavour the meat of beef cattle, and when the plants with seedpods are found in feed in excessive amounts, they may actually be poisonous to horses, cattle, and pigs. You should be careful to use this plant in moderation only.

Chickweed

(Pink Family)

Other Names
Known in England by such whimsical names as mischievous Jack, skirt-buttons, chick wittles, and cluckenweed.

How to Recognize
A weak, straggling plant, branching out from a central root. The leaves are small, bright green, pointed, and opposite, and the flowers are tiny, white, and star-like. The stems are covered with lines of fine hairs. The seed capsules are small and oval-shaped. Although chickweed is an annual, it often survives the winter and may be found blooming virtually throughout the year in areas where the snow cover is light. Do not confuse it with the smooth petty spurge (*Euphorbia peplus* L.), which exudes a milky juice when broken, or the stiff, hairy mouse-ear chickweed (*Cerastium vulgatum* L.).

Where to Find
Common (for some, all too common!) in gardens and damp, shaded meadows throughout North America and most of the world.

How to Use
This plant, hated by gardeners, can be transformed from a garden pest to a deliciously tender dish by anyone wishing to experiment. Pick the young, growing tips of whole plants (stripping off the roots immediately), cut the stems with leaves attached (flowers too) into bite-size pieces, and wash. Use raw in salads or simmer the

***Stellaria media* (L.) Cyrill.**
(Caryophyllaceae)

sprigs in a minimum of water, adding butter and salt after cooking. Provide extra zest with lime juice, lemon juice, vinegar, Parmesan cheese, garlic, onion, or grated nutmeg. Serve with your favourite meat dish.

Suggested Recipes

Oriental-Style Chickweed

15 ml	**peanut oil**	**1 tbsp**
	1 clove garlic, minced	
750 ml	**chickweed leaves, washed and chopped**	**3 cups**
10 ml	**cornstarch**	**2 tsp**
15 ml	**soy sauce**	**1 tbsp**
250 ml	**cold water**	**1 cup**
2 ml	**grated ginger**	**1/2 tsp**
125 ml	**chow mein noodles**	**1/2 cup**

Heat oil in a frying pan or wok. Add garlic and stir-fry until well browned. Add chickweed leaves and stir constantly for 3 minutes. Mix cornstarch and soy sauce in water and pour over chickweed. Add ginger. Stir until the liquid thickens, being careful not to overcook. Add noodles. Stir, and serve immediately. Serves 2.
Note: Other vegetables, such as sliced onions, carrots, broccoli, celery, or bean sprouts may be substituted for part of the chickweed. Mushrooms and almonds can also be added.

Chickweed Salad

Wash and cut young chickweed sprigs. Serve sprinkled with herbs in individual salad bowls with oil-and-vinegar or blue-cheese dressing. Allow about 125 ml (1/2 cup) of chickweed per serving.

More for Your Interest

Canaries, budgies, wild songbirds, and game birds of all kinds relish this delicate plant. As early as the seventeenth century John Gerard, the famous herbalist, remarked in *The Herbal or General History of Plants:* "Little birds in cadges (especially Linnets) are refreshed with . . . chickweed when they loath their meat." Dr. Matthew Robinson, in *The New Family Herbal*, published in the late nineteenth century, prescribes chickweed juice for scurvy and inflammation of the eyes, and chopped, boiled chickweed as a poultice for sores, swellings, and skin ulcers.

Orache

(Goosefoot Family)

Other Names
Saltweed, saltbush, silverscale.

How to Recognize
The oraches are closely related to both spinach and lamb's-quarters (see *Chenopodium album*, p. 102). There are many species in North America, but the most common weedy ones are: the common orache, or spearscale, (*A. patula* L.): the hastate orache (*A. hastata* L., commonly considered a variety of the previous species); the garden orache, or French spinach, (*A. hortensis* L.); and the rosy orache (*A. rosea* L.).

All are annuals with erect (or somewhat creeping), freely branching stems carrying many alternate leaves that decrease in size from bottom to top. The stems of the garden orache may exceed 1 m in height; the others are generally shorter. The basal leaves (and often the upper leaves) are stalked and usually somewhat shield-shaped or triangular, usually with shallowly lobed or wavy margins. The flowers are small, without petals, and inconspicuous, in tight clusters in the axils of the upper leaves or on the tips of the stems. In the garden orache, the flower clusters may exceed 30 cm in length. The male and female flowers are borne separately but are usually on the same plant. The seeds of the garden orache are flattened

Atriplex hortensis

***Atriplex* species**
(Chenopodiaceae)

and enclosed in brown disc-shaped papery bracts that are quite large at maturity. (Sometimes a second type of flower produces bractless small black shiny seeds.) The seeds of the other species are enclosed in smaller triangular bracts that are smooth or covered with bumpy outgrowths. The plants, when young, are covered with a whitish mealy coating, like that of lamb's-quarters. This usually disappears with maturity. Often the stems and leaves of the oraches are tinged with red or purple. A red-leaved variety *(A. hortensis* var. *atro-sanguinea)* of the garden orache, sometimes called "red spinach", is commonly cultivated in many parts of Canada and is often found as an escape. It is truly a spectacular plant, being a bright beet colour, with candy-striped red and purplish stems, and is a most attractive addition to any garden.

Where to Find

The common and hastate oraches are native to North America, and commonly occur on saline or alkaline soils throughout the continent and in Europe as well. They are often found just above the high-tide line along the coast and in waste places, railway yards, and neglected gardens. The garden orache, including both green- and red-leaved varieties, is a native of Asia, where it is grown as a potherb. It is occasionally cultivated in North America and often escapes and persists in gardens and around populated areas. The rosy orache, an Old World species that has been widely introduced in temperate North America, is found along roadsides and railway embankments, and in cultivated fields in some parts of Canada.

How to Use

The leaves and young stems of these plants make an excellent potherb, equal to spinach, beet greens, and lamb's-quarters. As cooked greens, they should be simmered in a minimum of water until they are soft and limp but before they become mushy. In our opinion, the garden orache is superior to spinach as a crop vegetable because it can be harvested over a much longer period of time. Also, if the red variety is planted, it is much more colourful than spinach. The leaves of red spinach, cut into strips, can be used just like red cabbage to enhance both the taste and appearance of a tossed salad. They never fail to draw compliments from guests.

Orache seeds are also edible, and, like amaranth and lamb's-quarters seeds, can be used in soups, cereals, or breads and muffins.

Suggested Recipes

Savory Orache Casserole

625 ml	whole-wheat (or vegetable) elbow macaroni, uncooked	2 1/2 cups
50 ml	butter	1/4 cup
50 ml	whole-wheat flour	1/4 cup
250 ml	milk	1 cup
250 ml	orache leaves, green or red variety, washed and shredded	1 cup
250 ml	ricotta or cottage cheese	1 cup
50 ml	fresh parsley, finely chopped	1/4 cup
250 ml	fresh mushrooms, sliced	1 cup
30 ml	chopped pimiento (optional)	2 tbsp
	dash of salt	
	dash of cayenne pepper	
50 ml	shredded Cheddar *or* grated Parmesan cheese	1/4 cup

Cook macaroni according to package directions, drain, and set aside. Melt butter in a saucepan over moderate heat, add flour, and stir until smooth. Gradually add milk, and stir constantly until the mixture is thick and creamy. Set aside. In a large bowl, combine all the remaining ingredients, except the Cheddar *or* Parmesan cheese, and blend well. Add sauce and mix well. Spoon into a greased casserole and sprinkle with Cheddar *or* Parmesan. Bake at 180°C (350°F) for about 40 minutes, until the top is brown and crispy. This dish is a complete and delicious meal in itself. Serves 4–6.

Orache Soup

50 ml	butter	1/4 cup
50 ml	minced onion	1/4 cup
1 L	young, tender orache leaves, washed and finely chopped	4 cups
1 L	chicken broth	4 cups
	dash of nutmeg	
	dash of paprika	

Melt butter in a saucepan and sauté onion until golden brown. Add orache leaves, coat completely with butter, cover, and cook until orache is soft (5–10 minutes). Press through a sieve or purée in a blender, then return to saucepan. Add chicken broth and seasonings, reheat, and serve with crackers and cheese. Serves 4.

Sicilian Orache

15 ml	butter	1 tbsp
30 ml	olive oil	2 tbsp
	1 clove garlic, minced	
750 ml	tightly packed young orache leaves, washed and shredded	3 cups
	3 chopped anchovies	

Heat butter and olive oil in a heavy skillet. Add garlic and orache leaves. Cover immediately and cook over high heat until the orache begins to steam, and then reduce heat and simmer for 3 more minutes. Add anchovies at the last minute and serve hot. Serves 3.

More for Your Interest

The garden orache has long been used as a potherb in Europe and Asia. It was known to the ancient Greeks under the name *atraphaxis* and to the Romans as *atriplex*. In 1548 it was introduced into England, where it was called *areche*.

Wild oraches are important food plants for many birds and animals. Canada geese eat the seeds, leaves, and stems; quail, larks, sparrows, and many small mammals eat the seeds; and deer, pronghorns, rabbits, and mountain sheep browse the foliage.

Lamb's-Quarters

(Goosefoot Family)

Other Names
Sometimes called goosefoot because the leaves of some species resemble the webbed foot of a goose; also called mutton chops, pigweed, fat-hen, and wild spinach.

How to Recognize
Lamb's-quarters is an annual weed with a simple to freely branching upright stem up to 1 m tall, having long-stalked, somewhat fleshy alternate leaves that are more or less triangular and broadly toothed, especially near the base. The young growth is covered with a whitish mealy coating. The flowers are small, pale green, and numerous, in tight clusters near the top. The seeds are small, shiny, and black. It should be noted that this plant is extremely variable in the amount of mealy coating and in the shape and lobation of the leaves. Do not confuse it with the black nightshade, also known as wild tomato (*Solanum nigrum* L.), which is small and brighter green. The leaves are similar in shape, but the nightshade has drooping white flowers, like those of potato plants, and a small black berry. The herbage of the black nightshade is poisonous but the ripe fruit is edible.

Where to Find
Lamb's-quarters is one of our best-known and most ubiquitous weeds, common in gardens, manure piles, and freshly disturbed sites. Every gardener knows it well, and in many areas it is considered the most abundant of all weeds. A native of Europe, it is naturalized throughout North America.

How to Use
The young leaves and tops make an excellent salad ingredient or they may be cooked as greens. The seeds can be separated from the surrounding tissue by winnowing in the wind. They can be cooked to a mush, dried, and ground into flour or used in soups and stews. Some people claim that the greens of this plant are better tasting than spinach. A number of related species can be similarly used.

***Chenopodium album* L. and related species**
(Chenopodiaceae)

Suggested Recipes

Cream of Lamb's-Quarters Soup

1 L	fresh lamb's-quarters leaves, washed	4 cups
50 ml	chopped onion	1/4 cup
50 ml	chopped celery	1/4 cup
500 ml	water	2 cups
2 ml	salt	1/2 tsp
45 ml	butter *or* margarine	3 tbsp
45 ml	flour	3 tbsp
625 ml	light cream *or* whole milk	2 1/2 cups
	salt, black pepper to taste	

In a saucepan place lamb's-quarters leaves, onion, and celery. Add water and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer until tender (5–10 minutes). Press through a sieve or purée in a blender and set aside. Melt butter *or* margarine in a saucepan. Blend in flour and let bubble for a few minutes. Slowly add cream *or* milk, and stir until thick and smooth. Add lamb's-quarters purée and seasonings, and blend well. Serve hot with crisp crackers. Serves 4.

Scalloped Lamb's-Quarters, Italian Style

1 L	fresh lamb's-quarters leaves, washed	4 cups
125 ml	water	1/2 cup
50 ml	butter *or* margarine	1/4 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	
50 ml	flour	1/4 cup
500 ml	canned tomatoes	2 cups
	buttered bread-crumbs	
	grated Parmesan cheese	

Boil lamb's-quarters leaves in water for 3 minutes. Drain. Add half the butter *or* margarine and seasonings, and set aside. In a saucepan melt remaining butter *or* margarine, stir in flour, and let bubble for a few minutes. Slowly add tomatoes and cook until thickened. Spread lamb's-quarters leaves in the bottom of a greased casserole and top with tomato mixture. Sprinkle buttered breadcrumbs over the top and bake at 190°C (375°F) for 20 minutes or until browned. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Lamb's-Quarters and Bacon

Dice 2 strips of bacon and fry until crisp. Remove all fat from pan except 15 ml (1 tbsp), and add 250 ml (1 cup) washed, chopped lamb's-quarters leaves. Fry until leaves are tender (3–5 minutes). A quick delicious meal. Serves 1.

Lamb's-Quarters Greens

Wash 1 L (4 cups) fresh, tender lamb's-quarters leaves and cook in 50 ml (1/4 cup) water until soft (15–20 minutes). Drain and season with salt and black pepper to taste, and serve with butter or a white sauce. Makes an excellent substitute for spinach. Serves 4.

More for Your Interest

This plant, which is related to spinach, contains more iron and protein than either spinach or cabbage and more vitamin B_1 and calcium than raw cabbage. It was an important food of prehistoric peoples in Europe and, although largely replaced by spinach, it has been used in modern times in Ireland, in the Hebrides, and, during the famines of World War II, in many parts of Europe. Napolean used this plant as an emergency food for his armies during his European campaigns.

Red Clover and White Clover

(Pea Family)

Other Names
Red clover is also called pink or purple clover; white clover is also known as Dutch clover.

How to Recognize
A number of plants in the pea family are referred to as clover; for example, some *Medicago* species are called bur-clovers, and *Melilotus* species are known as sweet-clovers. The true clovers belong to the genus *Trifolium* (meaning "three leaves"), which contains almost 300 different species. Many of these, including the two described here, are of major agricultural importance.

Red and white clover are well known to almost everyone. Most of us can remember happy childhood days of searching for four-leaved clovers and sucking the nectar from clover flowers. Both of these species are herbaceous perennials, with characteristic compound leaves divided into 3 more-or-less-equal leaflets joined at one point. Red clover is taprooted, with several erect hairy stems up to 1 m high. White clover has long, smooth, creeping, or sometimes erect, stems that root at the nodes. They seldom exceed 10 or 20 cm in height and often form extensive patches. Red clover leaflets are somewhat elongated; those of white clover are more rounded. The ball-shaped flower heads of red clover are large, with many pale-pink to deep

***Trifolium pratense* L. and *T. repens* L.**
(Fabaceae or Leguminosae)

Trifolium pratense (above)
Trifolium repens (below)

reddish-purple flowers. White clover flower heads are smaller, with white or pinkish-tinged flowers, and are borne on long stalks growing out from the leaf axils. The flowers of both species mature from the bottom of the head upwards: when they reach maturity and are pollinated, they close and turn downwards. Each tiny fruit produces 1 to 3 seeds.

Where to Find

Red and white clover were both introduced to North America from Europe as crop plants, being commonly used for hay, silage, fodder, and soil improvement. They have established themselves widely across Canada in lawns, fields, gardens, roadsides, and waste places, from sea-level to sub-alpine elevations.

How to Use

The underground rootstocks of the white clover are sweet and pleasant to eat, but somewhat tough. They can be prepared in the same way as those of the wild clover (*T. wormskjoldii* Lehm.) that the Indians of the Pacific Coast steam-cooked, dipped in oil or grease, and ate with their fingers. The Indians used grease rendered from a small oily fish—the eulachon, or candlefish. The rootstocks are best dug in the early spring or fall. The young leaves and flowers of both species may be nibbled raw or used as a salad ingredient. They are wholesome and very nutritious, though they are said to be difficult to digest and should therefore be eaten only in small quantities. As a cooked vegetable they are popular with many people in Europe and on this continent as well. They are sweeter than most cooked greens. Clover flowers make a palatable herbal tea, alone or mixed with other herbs, such as spearmint or comfrey. The flower nectar is a delicious treat for children and grown-ups alike, not to mention bumblebees and honeybees, which will travel many miles to a clover patch. Clover honey is a favourite with honey lovers everywhere.

Suggested Recipes

Clover Tea

This is easy to make. Just gather the mature clover flowers on a dry summer day and dry them in a well-ventilated room, or in the sun on a warm day. (Do not use extensive heat.) When they are thoroughly dry, crush them by rubbing into small pieces and seal them in jars to retain their flavour.

To prepare the tea, infuse 5 ml (1 tsp) dry clover per 250 ml (1 cup) of boiling water and serve as you would any oriental tea. A few drops of lemon or raspberry juice, or dried orange peel may be added. Some like to drink clover tea flavoured with mint or sweetened with honey.

Clover–Potato Salad

500 ml	young clover leaves, washed and chopped	2 cups
500 ml	cold cooked potatoes, cut into rounds or cubed	2 cups
	1 small can of sliced mushrooms, drained	
	1 stalk raw celery, thinly sliced	
	4 slices bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled	
	salt, pepper to taste	
30 ml	olive oil	2 tbsp
30 ml	wine vinegar	2 tbsp
	grated Parmesan cheese	

In a salad bowl, combine clover leaves, potatoes, mushrooms, celery, and bacon. Add seasonings, olive oil, and wine vinegar. Toss well, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, chill, and serve. Serves 4.

Clover Soup, Chinese Style

250 g	pork shoulder, trimmed of fat and cubed	1/2 lb
1 L	chicken broth *or* water	4 cups
500 ml	clover leaves, washed and chopped	2 cups
30 ml	soy sauce	2 tbsp
2 ml	grated fresh ginger	1/2 tsp
	2 green onions, chopped	
	salt, pepper to taste	

Simmer pork in chicken broth *or* water for 1 hour or until tender. Add clover leaves and simmer for 10 more minutes. Add soy sauce, ginger, green onions, and seasonings. Serve hot. Serves 4.

Pacific Oysters in Clover

500 ml	clover leaves and flowers, washed and chopped	2 cups
30 ml	butter	2 tbsp
	12 large, fresh Pacific oysters	
250 ml	white table wine	1 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	

Sauté clover in butter for 3–5 minutes. Add oysters with their liquid and simmer, covered, until edges of oysters curl. Add wine, reheat, add seasonings, and serve hot. Serves 4.

Fillet of Sole with Clover, Maritime Style

50 ml	butter	1/4 cup
1 kg	fillet of sole	2 lb
	1 medium onion, finely chopped	
15 ml	lemon juice	1 tbsp
250 ml	white table wine	1 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	
500 ml	clover leaves, washed and chopped	2 cups
250 ml	fresh mushrooms, sliced	1 cup

Melt half the butter in a large skillet, and add sole, onion, lemon juice, wine and seasonings. Cover and cook for 10 minutes at moderate heat. While fish is cooking, sauté clover leaves and mushrooms in remaining butter. Place fish mixture in a greased casserole, and top with clover and mushrooms. Bake at 180°C (350°F) for 15–20 minutes. Serve hot with rice and lemon wedges. Serves 4–6.

More for Your Interest

Clover is one of the most important survival foods, being widely known, unmistakable, and common. The dried flowers and seeds of red and white clovers have been used for making bread in times of famine in Ireland. Druid priests and medicine men of early Britain held it sacred, and it is also said to symbolize the Trinity. The four-leaved clover, an occasional mutation of the white clover, is thought to be a portent of good fortune, and the expression "to be in clover" is a synonym for abundance and prosperity.

Stork's-Bill

(Geranium Family)

Other Names
Alfilaria, filaree, clocks, pin-grass, heronsbill.

How to Recognize
This is an annual with spreading to upright stems radiating from a central root. The leaves, which are mostly basal, are pinnately compound, with a number of coarsely toothed leaflets increasing in size upwards. The stalks are usually reddish and covered with short, soft hairs. The flowers, in small clusters, are pink to rose, with small petals that fall off readily. The fruits form a long, sharp "beak", like a stork's bill.

Where to Find
A native of the Old World, stork's-bill is now widespread on dry plains and hillsides and in lawns and gardens throughout North America.

How to Use
The young leaves are palatable and nutritious. They can be eaten raw in salads or cooked as a potherb. Try them with a few drops of lemon juice or some herbs, such as spearmint and thyme. As it is difficult to collect enough leaves for an entire meal of stork's-bill, mix them with other greens.

Suggested Recipes

Filaree Omelette

15 ml	butter *or* margarine	1 tbsp
250 ml	stork's-bill leaves, washed and chopped	1 cup
	4 eggs	
125 ml	whole milk *or* light cream	1/2 cup
1 ml	salt	1/4 tsp
1 ml	black pepper	1/4 tsp
	4 strips bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled (optional)	
	grated cheese	

In a heavy skillet, melt butter *or* margarine and heat until it starts to bubble. Add stork's-bill leaves and cook over moderate heat about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, beat together eggs, milk *or* cream, seasonings, and bacon if desired. Add egg mixture to skillet, stir gently, and allow omelette to set. Sprinkle with grated cheese. Serve at once with buttered toast. Serves 2.

Stork's-Bill with Tomatoes

500 ml	young stork's-bill leaves, washed and chopped	2 cups
50 ml	water	1/4 cup
	1 small clove garlic, minced	
30 ml	olive oil	2 tbsp
	1 small can tomato paste	
	salt, pepper to taste	
2 ml	oregano	1/2 tsp

Place stork's-bill leaves and water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer 5 minutes. Drain and set aside. Sauté garlic in olive oil until lightly browned. Add stork's-bill leaves, tomato paste, and seasonings. Mix thoroughly and reheat. Serve over rice or noodles. Serves 2.

More for Your Interest

This plant has been raised on the open range, under the name of alfilaria, as an important winter forage for livestock, especially sheep. It is common in towns with woollen mills, where it is transported entangled in the wool. Each individual fruit has a long, thin "tail" that forms part of the "stork's-bill". When the fruits ripen, this "tail" suddenly coils up like a corkscrew and actually helps drill the seed into the ground.

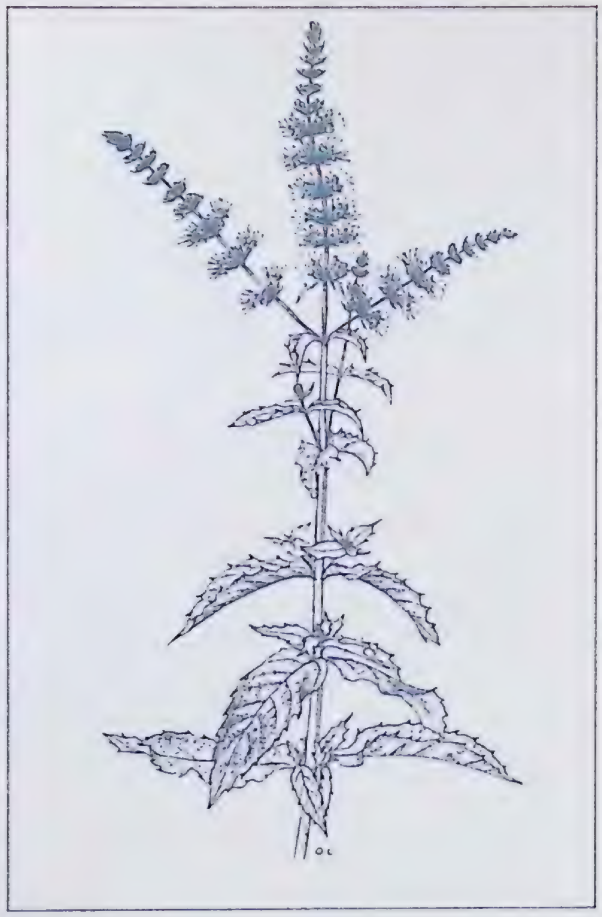
Spearmint

(Mint Family)

Other Names
Garden mint, mint.

How to Recognize
This well-known aromatic herb is a perennial with creeping rootstocks. The stems are erect and clustered, sometimes branching; as with almost all mints, they are square in cross-section. The leaves, in opposite pairs, are bright green, lance-shaped to ellipse-shaped, toothed, and sharply pointed. The flowers are small and numerous, in dense, slender terminal clusters; they are pale lavender or occasionally white. Several other mint species, including peppermint (*M. piperita* L.) and our wild Canada mint, or field mint (*M. arvensis* L.), can also be found in and around Canadian gardens, and can be used in a similar manner to spearmint.

Where to Find
A native of Europe, spearmint is widely cultivated as a herb in North American gardens. It is extremely aggressive and should be contained in a pot or bucket sunk into the ground to prevent it from spreading and crowding out other plants. Once established, it is almost impossible to eliminate. It is a common garden escape and is found along streambanks and ditches, and in old orchards and gardens across the country. Although it is a legitimate garden plant, many gardeners will testify that it can also be considered a weed, for it persists whether it is wanted or not.



***Mentha spicata* L.**
(Lamiaceae or Labiatae)

How to Use

Spearmint is a valuable culinary herb, a flavouring, and beverage plant. Like other mints, it contains a volatile oil that is the essence of its refreshing odour and taste. It can be used fresh, or it can be dried or frozen for winter use. A few chopped spearmint leaves added to a tossed salad along with other fresh herbs such as thyme, marjoram, and sweet cicely will bring you many compliments. A few stems of spearmint cooked with new potatoes or peas add a refreshing flavour that is hard to beat. Use fresh spearmint sprigs as a garnish for cold plates, fruit salads, and iced beverages. Try freezing spearmint sprigs in individual ice cubes to be used in cold drinks: the effect is most pleasing. You will soon find your spearmint patch indispensable.

Suggested Recipes

Candied Spearmint

2 dozen fresh spearmint leaves, washed and patted dry

1 egg white, stiffly beaten

confectioner's sugar

Dip spearmint leaves, one at a time, in egg white and then in confectioner's sugar, so that they are thoroughly coated. Dry in the oven at low heat, about 100°C (200°F) for 30 minutes, or until crisp. Serve as an after-dinner treat.

Minted Baby Carrots

500 g	baby carrots, cleaned and scrubbed	1 lb
1 ml	salt	1/4 tsp
175 ml	boiling water	3/4 cup
50 ml	butter	1/4 cup
50 ml	brown sugar	1/4 cup
15 ml	spearmint leaves, washed and finely chopped	1 tbsp

Add carrots and salt to boiling water. Cover, return to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes or until tender. Drain. Melt butter in saucepan. Add brown sugar, spearmint leaves, and cooked carrots. Stir constantly over low heat until carrots are well glazed. Serves 4.

Mint Sauce

250 ml	cider vinegar	1 cup
125 ml	sugar	1/2 cup
250 ml	spearmint leaves, washed and finely chopped	1 cup

Heat vinegar and sugar together until steaming. Pour over spearmint leaves in a glass bowl and allow to stand for about 2 hours. Serve with spring lamb. This can be stored several weeks in a jar in the refrigerator and used when needed.

Mint Fruit Cup

30 ml	spearmint leaves, washed and finely chopped	2 tbsp
	1 large orange, peeled and cut up	
	10–12 pitted cherries, *or* purple grapes, *or* strawberries	
	1/2 canteloupe, cubed	
	1 small can pineapple chunks, drained	
	1 fresh peach, sliced	
	1 fresh pear, sliced	
	1 banana, sliced	
15 ml	lemon juice	1 tbsp
30 ml	fruit sugar	2 tbsp
30 ml	sherry	2 tbsp
5 ml	ascorbic acid (vitamin C)	1 tsp
	sprigs of fresh spearmint (washed) for garnish	

Combine all ingredients except garnish and ascorbic acid. Sprinkle ascorbic acid over top and toss lightly. Chill. Serve in sherbet glasses and garnish with sprigs of spearmint. Serves 4–6.

Mint Tea

Harvest spearmint leaves when flowers first open, preferably on a dry, sunny morning. Wash the leaves and pat them dry. Spread on waxed paper, and allow to dry for about two days at room temperature. Do not dry in the oven as the natural oil will evaporate at oven temperature. Store in a tightly sealed container and use as needed. Use about 5 ml (1 tsp) crushed, dried leaves per 250 ml (1 cup) of boiling water. Steep in a covered pot for at least 10 minutes before serving.

Quick Mint–Apple Jelly

250 ml	**fresh spearmint leaves, washed**	**1 cup**
750 ml	**apple juice *or* cider (non-alcoholic)**	**3 cups**
	few drops green food colouring (optional)	
57 g	**1 package powdered pectin**	**2 oz**
1 L	**sugar**	**4 cups**

In a large kettle combine spearmint leaves and apple juice *or* cider. Heat to scalding, remove from heat, and let stand for 15 minutes. Strain through a jelly cloth, return to kettle, add colouring and pectin, and bring to a full boil. Stir in sugar and return to a rolling boil. Boil for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat, skim off foam, and pour immediately into sterilized jelly glasses, sealing with sterilized lids and rings as each glass is filled. Invert the jars briefly to coat the top surface with hot jelly and then place right-side-up and cool. Makes 6 medium-size glasses.

More for Your Interest

Spearmint was cultivated as a culinary and medicinal herb in the gardens of convents and monasteries as early as the ninth century. In the words of the famous herbalist, John Gerard, in *The Herbal or General History of Plants*,

> Mint is marvellous wholesome for the stomacke, it staieth the Hicket, parbraking, vomiting and scouring in the Cholerike passion, if it be taken with the juice of a soure pomegranate. It stoppeth the casting up of blood, being given with water and vinegar. . . . It is good against watering eies, and all manner of breakings out in the head. . . . It is poured into the eares with honie water. It is taken inwardly against Scolopenders, Beareworms, Seascorpions and serpents. It is applied with salt to the bitings of mad dogs.

Today spearmint is still valued for relief of mild indigestion. It is extensively cultivated in North America, the oil being used mainly as a flavouring for candies, chewing gum, mouthwashes, and medicines.

Common Mallow

(Mallow Family)

Other Names
Cheese weed, country cheese.

How to Recognize
This is an erect to prostrate annual or short-lived perennial, usually well under one-half a metre high. The leaves are bluish green and long-stalked, with rounded or heart-shaped blades that are usually shallowly lobed and finely toothed. The five-petalled flowers are borne singly or in twos and threes along the length of the stems in the leaf axils. The petals are pale lilac to nearly white and shallowly notched at the tips. The fruits are round and flattened, resembling miniature country cheese-rounds. They are divided into 12 to 15 individual segments, or carpels, each containing a seed. These break apart easily when ripe.

Some other species of mallow are locally common in parts of Canada. Their flowers are similar to those of common mallow, but in some cases are larger and showier. They may be used in the same way as common mallow.

Where to Find
Common mallow was introduced from Europe and occurs in every province in Canada, with the possible exception of Saskatchewan. It is most common in the populated areas of Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia, in gardens, lawns, cultivated fields, barnyards, and waste places.

How to Use
All of the mallow species are edible. The leaves may be used raw in salads, but they have a slightly rough texture that some may find irritating to the tongue. It is preferable to cook them like spinach or, better yet, use them in soups. They give soup stock a glutinous texture. A closely related species is used in Egypt and other Arab countries to make a popular traditional soup, *melokhia*. Use only young mallow leaves; the older ones become tough and bitter.

The disc-shaped fruits of the mallow are also edible, having a crisp texture and a mild nutty flavour reminiscent of okra. English children have enjoyed nibbling them for centuries. They call them "fairy cheeses".

Suggested Recipes

Mallow Soup, Arabian Style

1 L	young mallow leaves, washed	4 cups
1 L	chicken broth	4 cups
	1–2 cloves of garlic, minced	
15 ml	oil	1 tbsp
2 ml	ground coriander	1/2 tsp
	pinch cayenne pepper	
	salt to taste	

Remove stems from mallow leaves and discard. Chop leaves finely or purée in a blender. Add to chicken broth and simmer for 10 minutes. Sauté garlic in oil until golden brown and add seasonings. Add this mixture to broth. Cover and simmer for 2–3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve hot. Serves 4.

Children's Mallow "Cheese" Hors-d'Oeuvre

	12 mallow fruits (ripe but still green) per child	
	1 small package cream cheese	
15 ml	lemon juice	1 tbsp
30 ml	grape *or* currant jelly	2 tbsp
125 ml	light cream	1/2 cup

Wash the mallow fruits, or "cheeses", and stick a toothpick into the centre of each, Mix cream cheese, lemon juice, jelly, and cream. Children can dip their "cheeses" one at a time into the cream-cheese mixture and eat them from the toothpicks.

Mallow and Bacon

500 ml	young mallow leaves, washed and shredded	2 cups
50 ml	water	1/4 cup
5 ml	lemon juice *or* cider vinegar	1 tsp
	salt to taste	
	2 strips crisp, cooked bacon, crumbled	

Add mallow leaves to water, bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 3 minutes. Drain. Place in a heated serving bowl and pour over lemon juice *or* vinegar. Add salt and bacon, and toss lightly. Serve with bread and honey for a delicious light lunch. Serves 2.

Mallow with Cheese Sauce

250 ml	young mallow leaves, washed	1 cup
50 ml	water	1/4 cup
50 ml	butter *or* margarine	1/4 cup
50 ml	whole-wheat flour	1/4 cup
250 ml	whole milk *or* light cream	1 cup
125 ml	grated Cheddar cheese, medium or old	1/2 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	

Remove stems from mallow leaves and discard. Cut leaves into thin strips and place in a saucepan with water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 3 minutes, or until soft. Drain and set aside. In another saucepan, melt butter *or* margarine and stir in flour. Add milk *or* cream gradually and cook over moderate heat, stirring frequently, until sauce is thick and creamy. Add cheese and stir until smooth. Add mallow and seasonings. Serve hot over rice or potatoes. Serves 3–4.

More for Your Interest

Marshmallows, the well-known campfire confection, are made today with sugar, corn syrup, and gelatin, but were formerly made from the mucilaginous root of a species closely related to common mallow, the marsh mallow or white mallow *(Althaea officinalis* L.).

Mallows were widely used medicinally in both Europe and North America. The leaves were traditionally employed as poultices for cuts, sores, inflammations, and bruises. Being highly mucilaginous, they are an excellent demulcent, for soothing and protecting irritated mucous membranes. As an infusion, the leaves and roots make a soothing tea that can ease mild digestive problems and relieve coughs due to colds. Mallow cough drops are still sold in the pharmacies of eastern Europe.

Common Evening-Primrose

(Evening-Primrose Family)

Other Name
Yellow evening-primrose.

How to Recognize
This herbaceous plant, a native of the North American continent, is a biennial with a branching, fleshy taproot. In the first year a broad, low-lying rosette of thickish lance-shaped leaves up to 15 cm long is produced. The following year an erect hairy stem, often well over 1 m tall, develops from the rosette. The stem leaves are smaller, alternate, and stalkless, with sparsely toothed margins. In the leaf axils near the ends of the stems are borne showy four-petalled yellow flowers, followed by hairy elongated seedpods that split into four sections, each with many tiny reddish-brown seeds. After fruiting, the plant dies.

Where to Find
Evening-primrose originated on this continent. It was introduced to Europe, and has spread throughout North America, in many cases with man's help. You will find it in all provinces, but it is more common in eastern Canada. It prefers dry, well-drained habitats, such as rocky slopes and sandy or gravelly areas. It also grows in old gardens, sunny pastures, waste places, and along roadsides.

***Oenothera biennis* L.**
(Onagraceae)

How to Use

The basal leaves can be used as a potherb or as an addition to soups and stews. However, it is the nutritious and tasty roots that are more commonly eaten. They can be boiled like carrots or any other root vegetable, or used as an ingredient in soups, sauces, and stews. Only the roots from the first-year (non-flowering) plants should be used. We recommend boiling them in two changes of lightly salted water and peeling them just before serving. You will find the roots very palatable and somewhat nut-like in taste. We urge you to try the recipes for this wild, weedy plant that has been unjustifiably neglected for so many years. It will bring a pleasant change to your cooking.

Suggested Recipes

Evening-Primrose Sauce with Mushrooms

	6 well-developed evening-primrose roots	
125 ml	canned or fresh mushrooms, sliced	1/2 cup
30 ml	butter	2 tbsp
250 ml	white table wine	1 cup
	salt, pepper, garlic salt to taste	

Peel evening-primrose roots, cover with salted water, and boil until tender in two changes of water to remove any peppery taste. Drain and slice. In a heavy skillet, melt butter and add roots and mushrooms. Pour in wine and cook at moderate heat until liquid is reduced by half. Add seasonings and serve hot with steak or any other beef dish. Serves 2.

Curried Evening-Primrose Roots

	12 well-developed evening-primrose roots	
45 ml	butter	3 tbsp
30 ml	curry powder	2 tbsp
	salt to taste	

Peel evening-primrose roots, cover with salted water, and boil until tender in two changes of water to remove any peppery taste. Drain and slice. Melt butter in a heavy skillet, and add roots, curry and salt, stirring until roots are coated with curry. Simmer for 15 minutes. Serve hot with any meat dish. Serves 4.

Evening-Primrose Oyster Snack, West Coast Style

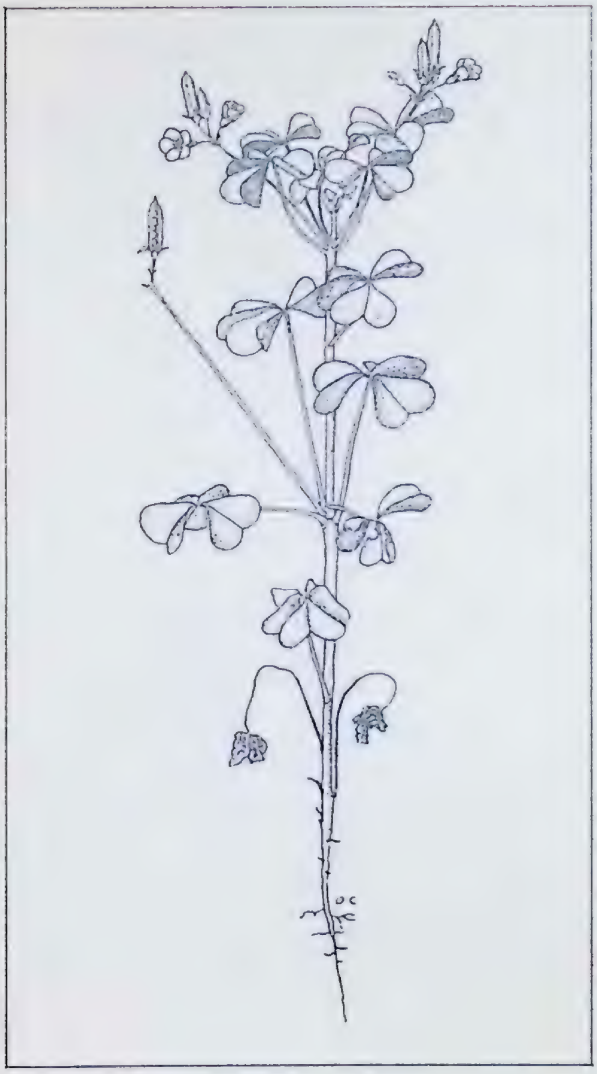
250 ml	evening-primrose roots	1 cup
30 ml	butter	2 tbsp
125 ml	sherry	1/2 cup
	12 fresh oysters	
	garlic salt	
	breadcrumbs	
	lemon juice	

Peel evening-primrose roots, cover with salted water, and boil until tender in two changes of water to remove any peppery taste. Chop very fine. Sauté in butter for 3 minutes, add sherry, and set aside. Clean oysters and bake in the half-shell at 180°C (350°F) for 3–5 minutes, depending on their size. Remove oysters from oven and cover each with roots. Sprinkle lightly with garlic salt and breadcrumbs, and bake until brown. Squeeze a few drops of lemon juice on each before serving. Serve very hot as an appetizer.

More for Your Interest

Evening-primrose is one of the very few plants native to this continent that were intentionally introduced to Europe and Asia as vegetables. First introduced to these continents in the seventeenth century, it is at present well established, being planted for its food and medicinal uses and for its beauty as a garden flower.

One of the early common names applied to the evening-primrose was "King's cure-all" because of its qualities in combating colds. A special tea was made for this purpose, still in use in Europe. We know some people who like this remedy so much that they collect evening-primrose every year to help fight winter colds. The recommended amount is 5 ml (1 tsp) of dry, finely cut plant (leaves and stems) per 250 ml (1 cup) boiling water. An ointment made from evening-primrose leaves was used in the past for treating skin disorders, such as eczema.



Yellow Wood-Sorrels

(Wood-Sorrel Family)

Other Names
Oxalis, sourgrass, sour trefoil, *sorrel du bois*.

How to Recognize
There are many species of wood-sorrel in North America, with flower colours ranging from white to purple to yellow. All are similar in taste and can be used interchangeably in recipes. Most are found in shaded woods, but some, particularly the yellow-flowered species, are aggressive and commonly occur as garden weeds. Three species are notable in Canada: *Oxalis stricta* L., *O. dillenii* Jacq., and *O. corniculata* L. As these species are similar and difficult to distinguish, we will treat them here as a group. They are leafy perennials, usually under 30 cm high, with erect or sometimes trailing stems. The leaves, like those of clover, are in three parts, each leaflet being heart-shaped, with the point towards the centre. The colour of the leaves and stems ranges from vivid green in *O. stricta* to greyish in *O. dillenii*, or often reddish purple in *O. corniculata*. At night or in cool weather the leaves fold up. The flowers are yellow and five-petalled, borne on slender stalks in loose few-flowered clusters. The fruiting capsules are elongated and pointed, and the mature seeds are small, brown, and wrinkled.

Oxalis corniculata

Where to Find

All three of the species described are troublesome weeds, widespread in North America and also occurring in Europe and other parts of the world. *Oxalis stricta* is common throughout southern Canada, *O. dillenii* occurs mainly in southeastern Canada, and *O. corniculata* is restricted almost entirely to southern British Columbia.

How to Use

The raw stems and leaves of the wood-sorrels are tasty and flavourful alone or added to salads. They are decorative and can be used as an unusual and tantalizing garnish. They should be eaten in small quantities, however, because they contain a high concentration of the sour-tasting oxalic acid, which can be poisonous in large doses. In moderation they are not at all dangerous.

The leaves are also a tasty addition to soups and stews and, like the leaves of sheep sorrel (see *Rumex acetosella*), make a superb sauce. They can be used like rhubarb in a pie, and can even be pickled to make a delectable "sauerkraut". Use about 10 ml (2 tsp) of salt per 500 g (1 lb) of drained, shredded leaves, and process as you would regular sauerkraut. The sour, tangy leaves can also be used to make a good lemonade substitute; just boil them in water, strain, add honey to taste, and chill. They are also said to make a delicious dry wine.

Suggested Recipes

Tangy Spring Salad

50 ml	**wood-sorrel leaves, washed and finely chopped**	**1/4 cup**
15 ml	**spearmint leaves, washed and finely chopped**	**1 tbsp**
	1 green onion, finely chopped	
	6 young lettuce leaves, torn into bite-size pieces	
	6 radishes, thinly sliced	
250 ml	**young dandelion greens, washed and very finely chopped**	**1 cup**
	salt, pepper to taste	
	whole wood-sorrel leaves (washed) for garnish	

Combine all ingredients except garnish, toss lightly, and serve with your favourite dressing. Garnish with whole wood-sorrel leaves. Serves 3–4.

Wood-Sorrel Cream Soup

500 ml	wood-sorrel leaves, washed	2 cups
25 ml	butter	1 1/2 tbsp
1 L	chicken broth	4 cups
250 ml	milk	1 cup
125 ml	light cream	1/2 cup
	3 egg yolks, beaten	
5 ml	tarragon, dried and crushed	1 tsp

In a stainless-steel or enamel saucepan sauté wood-sorrel leaves in butter until soft. Add broth and simmer 5 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside. In another saucepan scald milk and cream. Take a little of the hot liquid and mix into egg yolks, and then slowly add egg-yolk mixture to saucepan, stirring constantly. Add wood-sorrel and broth mixture. Reheat until soup becomes slightly thick, but *do not boil*. Sprinkle with tarragon and serve hot. A good accompaniment to veal or fish. Serves 4–6.

Wood-Sorrel Sauce for Fish and Game

500 ml	wood-sorrel leaves, washed	2 cups
30 ml	butter	2 tbsp
15 ml	honey (or to taste)	1 tbsp
15 ml	vinegar (or to taste)	1 tbsp

In a stainless-steel or enamel saucepan sauté wood-sorrel leaves in butter until soft. Purée in a blender, and mix in honey and vinegar. Serve over fish, game, or pork.

More for Your Interest

Various species of wood-sorrel have been used as green vegetables in many parts of the world. Perhaps the best known is the white-flowered *O. acetosella* L., which was a minor garden vegetable in Europe as early as the fifteenth century. The leaves have been used in Iceland, France, and elsewhere in Europe as a salad condiment and potherb, especially by farmers. Herbalist John Gerard recorded in 1633 that this sorrel, "stamped and used for green sauce, is good for them that have sicke and feeble stomackes: for it strenthneth the stomacke, procureth appetite, and of all Sorrel sauces is the best, not onely in vertue, but also in the pleasantnesse of his taste."

Common Plantain

(Plantain Family)

Other Names
Broad-leaved plantain, ribwort, ratstail, soldiers' herb.

How to Recognize
Plaintain is as well known as dandelion, lamb's-quarters, thistle, and clover. It is a low, perennial plant, rarely more than 30 cm high, with a short rootstock, attached firmly by many string-like roots. The leaves are arranged in basal rosettes and can reach 25 cm in length. They are smooth-edged, broadly elliptical in shape, strongly parallel-veined (ribbed), bright green, and dull in texture. Each leaf has a thick stalk, usually about as long as its blade. The flowers are small, green, and inconspicuous, grouped in long, compact clusters at the top of leafless stems. Egg-shaped seed capsules produce 6 to 30 small (about 1 mm long) seeds that are sticky when wet.

A very similar plant, Rugel's, or pale, plantain (*P. rugelii* Decne.), native to North America, can be found from southern Ontario to Nova Scotia. It differs from common plantain in having slightly toothed, paler-green leaves and purplish-red stem and leafstalk bases. Another species, narrow-leaved plantain (*P. lanceolata* L.), also known as English plantain, or ribgrass, is a weed introduced from Europe, very common in Canada east of the Great Lakes and in southern British Columbia. It has narrower, lance-shaped leaves and thicker, shorter flower spikes on long stalks. Both of these species are edible and can be substituted for common plantain. To some, however, narrow-leaved plantain is inferior to common plantain, being rather bitter and tough by comparison. We recommend that it be cooked in water sweetened with honey.

Where to Find
Common plantain is widely distributed throughout the world. Its history in North America is uncertain. It is known to be a native of Europe and Asia and is now well established on the American continent, but whether it was here before the first Europeans arrived is still subject to question. In Canada it is commonly found in the settled regions of all provinces, where it grows throughout the countryside and in grassy areas of big cities. You will find it in gardens, lawns, pastures, meadows, cultivated fields, waste places, and along roadsides.

***Plantago major* L.**
(Plantaginaceae)

How to Use

Uncooked plantain leaves make a good salad ingredient, especially when mixed with other salad greens. The use of plantain as a potherb has been known in Europe and Asia for centuries; it was cooked and served in the same manner as spinach. It makes a delicious cooked vegetable, at its best in spring, when the leaves are young and tender. In summer, when the leaves have developed tough fibres, try to collect the young growth only, and add sugar or honey when cooking to eliminate bitterness. Cooked plantain is comparable to spinach or dock in taste. Many people spoil it by overcooking; we recommend that you cover it and simmer in a minimum of water. The cooking time will depend on the tenderness of the leaves, but it should not be any longer than three or four minutes. All the water should be used up during the cooking, so that the minerals and vitamins will not be drained away.

Plantain leaves have long been used as tea. Plantain tea was, and still is, considered a healthful drink, rich in vitamins A and C. Making the tea is a simple process: infuse two large handfuls of leaves in 1 L (4 cups) of boiling water for half an hour—that's all!

The stone-ground seeds of plantain can be used for making breads and pancakes. Early Indians used them quite commonly as a source of flour. In fact, the plant was sometimes called "Indian wheat".

There are a hundred ways to use plantain. Try some of our favourite recipes.

Plantago major (left)
Plantago lanceolata (right)

Suggested Recipes

Plantain–Mushroom Salad

	2 medium potatoes, cooked and chilled	
500 ml	young plantain leaves, washed and shredded	2 cups
250 ml	sliced mushrooms, canned or fresh	1 cup
	1 green pepper, chopped	
45 ml	olive oil	3 tbsp
45 ml	wine vinegar	3 tbsp
	salt, pepper to taste	

Cut potatoes into strips. Add remaining ingredients and toss carefully. Chill. Serves 4.

Canadian Backyard Slaw

500 ml	young plantain leaves, washed and shredded	2 cups
250 ml	dandelion leaves, washed and shredded	1 cup
30 ml	chopped onion	2 tbsp
15 ml	celery seed	1 tbsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
50 ml	mayonnaise	1/4 cup
125 ml	beer	1/2 cup

Combine first five ingredients. Thin mayonnaise with beer and add to vegetables. Toss thoroughly. Chill. Serves 3–4.

Plantain *Mélange*

	1 clove garlic	
500 ml	young plantain leaves, washed and cut into strips	2 cups
	2 medium tomatoes, chopped	
	6 sliced radishes	
	1 stalk celery, sliced	
250 ml	watercress, washed and chopped	1 cup
15 ml	anchovy paste	1 tbsp
15 ml	red *or* black caviar (optional)	1 tbsp
	1 small package cream cheese	
30 ml	sour cream	2 tbsp
125 ml	French dressing	1/2 cup

Rub salad bowl with a cut clove of garlic. Discard garlic and combine plantain leaves, tomatoes, radishes, celery, and watercress. Mix in anchovy paste, and caviar if desired. In another bowl, blend cream cheese with sour cream and French dressing. Mix well and pour over salad. Toss and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Plantain Casserole

30 ml	butter	2 tbsp
	1 medium onion, chopped	
500 ml	plantain leaves, washed and coarsely chopped	2 cups
	salt, pepper to taste	
500 ml	cooked ham, cubed	2 cups
	2 hard-boiled eggs, sliced	
	1 can condensed mushroom soup	
125 ml	dry breadcrumbs *or* crushed potato chips	1/2 cup

Preheat oven to 150°C (300°F). Melt butter in a skillet, add onion, and cook over moderate heat until onion is brown. Add plantain leaves, coat with melted butter and add seasonings. In a greased casserole alternate a layer of plantain leaves with a layer of ham and eggs, making two layers of each. Pour mushroom soup over top and sprinkle with breadcrumbs *or* potato chips. Bake for 1 hour. Serves 3–4.

Plantain *Bourguignon*, Grandmother's Special

1 L	young plantain leaves, washed and chopped	4 cups
50 ml	butter	1/4 cup
15 ml	honey	1 tbsp
75 ml	good-quality dry red wine	1/3 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	

Cover plantain leaves with salted water, bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 4–5 minutes. Drain and place in a heavy skillet with butter. Cook over moderate heat, turning with a spoon until well coated with butter. Add honey and wine. Cover and simmer until leaves are tender. Add seasonings and serve hot with pork or veal—a pleasant change from boiled cabbage or chard. Serves 4.

More for Your Interest

Common plantain leaves and seeds are a good supplemental feed for domestic poultry and cage birds. They are widely used in Europe for this purpose. Collect the leaves and fruiting heads with the stems attached, tie in small bundles, and dry them in the sun. Canaries enjoy this treat; feed it to your bird if you want it to sing for its supper!

This plant is well known in both Europe and North America as a poultice for minor cuts, scratches, rashes, boils, and other skin infections. The fresh leaves are bruised and applied directly to the affected area. The fact that they are so widely used in this way by North American Indians is a good indication that this plant is a long-standing resident of this continent. Many Indians call it "frog leaves".

The mucilaginous seeds of some plantain species are used in many commercial laxative preparations.

Tartary Buckwheat

(Knotweed Family)

Other Names
Northern buckwheat, rough-seeded buckwheat, kasha, or *hreczka*.

How to Recognize
The Tartary buckwheat is an annual, with erect greenish stems and light-green leaves that are broadly triangular to arrowhead-shaped. The lower leaves have long stalks; the upper ones are short-stalked. The flowers are small, greenish, and clustered in the leaf axils and at the ends of the stems. The seeds are brownish or dark grey, dull and rough, and sharply three-sided.

The common buckwheat (*Fagopyrum sagittatum* Gilib.) is similar to Tartary buckwheat, but has reddish stems, bigger white or pinkish flowers in larger clusters, and smoother, larger, more sharply triangular seeds.

Both plants resemble the so-called wild buckwheat (*Polygonum convolvulus* L.), but wild buckwheat has a creeping or twining habit and small black seeds that are not practical to gather as food.

Where to Find

Tartary buckwheat, like common buckwheat, originates in Asia. It was introduced to North America as a crop plant and has been grown extensively in eastern Canada, particularly in New Brunswick, but today it seems to be decreasing in popularity. Tartary buckwheat is found as an escape in many parts of Canada, but at present it is a serious weed only in north-central Alberta and parts of Manitoba. However, it is spreading rapidly and may soon become a problem elsewhere in western Canada. Its seeds are a common contaminant of wheat and are very difficult to remove. The common buckwheat is grown as a crop plant in many parts of the country, and is not considered a weed.

How to Use

The seeds of both Tartary buckwheat and common buckwheat are an excellent and widely known grain. They can be cooked whole as cereal or ground into flour and substituted for any other whole-grain flour in your favourite recipes. Buckwheat pancakes are a popular treat, particulary well known in eastern Canada. They make a scrumptious breakfast, especially when smothered in butter and Canadian maple syrup. Buckwheat seeds are excellent in homemade granola cereal; they add just the right amount of crunch. Cooked buckwheat groats (seeds broken into fragments) make a pleasant porridge, commonly known in eastern Europe as kasha, or *kasza*. Kasha is served as a substitute for potatoes or cooked wheat, often with bacon or bacon drippings.

It is best to harvest buckwheat on a dry, windy day in August or September, as soon as the first blossoms have matured their seed and before the first frost. Harvest the entire tops and tie stems in bunches; hang upside-down for a few days to allow the seed to mature completely. On a commercial basis the plants can be reaped and thrashed by machine, but on a small scale you can cut the plants by hand and collect the grain by beating the tops over a tray, then winnowing away the light chaff by tossing the seeds lightly in the breeze and allowing the chaff to blow away.

Buckwheat should be stored in sacks in a cool, dry place. If you have no access to buckwheat as a wild plant, the grain is sold in health-food stores and other retail outlets in many parts of the country. Buckwheat is

also valued as a honey plant and has been widely cultivated for that purpose alone, especially in the eastern United States. The honey is a dark, purplish colour and quite thin, with a distinctive flavour.

Warning: Some people are allergic to buckwheat. If you have never tried it before, take only the smallest amount at first to be sure it causes you no problems. In addition, buckwheat foliage and seeds are capable, in some circumstances, of causing photosensitization (hypersensitivity to light) in animals and possibly in humans. This is rare in the northern hemisphere and would result only after prolonged exposure to intense sunlight, after one had consumed large amounts of buckwheat.

Suggested Recipes

Buckwheat Groats

250 ml	buckwheat groats	1 cup
	1 egg	
2 ml	salt	1/2 tsp
15 ml	vegetable oil	1 tbsp
500 ml	chicken *or* vegetable broth	2 cups

Mix together buckwheat groats, egg, and salt. Cook in a heavy skillet at high heat, stirring constantly to keep the grains separated. Stir in oil while cooking. Heat broth to boiling and add to buckwheat mixture. Cover and allow to steam for about half an hour. Serve hot with gravy as a main course. Serves 4.

Tartary Kasha, a Prairie Breakfast

625 ml	water	2 1/2 cups
125 ml	Tartary buckwheat groats	1/2 cup
125 ml	raisins *or* chopped dates	1/2 cup
	honey to taste	
125 ml	shredded coconut	1/2 cup

Bring water to a boil, add buckwheat groats, raisins *or* dates, and honey. Reduce heat and boil for 12–15 minutes, stirring constantly. Add coconut and cook for 5 more minutes. Serve hot (or cold) as a breakfast cereal or snack. Serves 4.

Note: This is an elaboration of a traditional Russian dish, popular with soldiers and farmers.

Granola with Buckwheat

250 ml	buckwheat seeds	1 cup
1 L	oak flakes (wheat, rye, or soy flakes may be substituted)	4 cups
250 ml	sunflower seeds	1 cup
250 ml	unsweetened coconut (optional)	1 cup
250 ml	safflower *or* sesame oil	1 cup
125 ml	liquid honey	1/2 cup
5 ml	salt	1 tsp
125 ml	sesame seeds (optional)	1/2 cup
250 ml	raisins	1 cup
250 ml	wheat germ	1 cup

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients except raisins and wheat germ. Spread out in a large baking pan and roast at 150°C (300°F) for about 45 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes or so. Remove from oven and stir in raisins and wheat germ while mixture is still hot. Cool for 30 minutes and stir until separated into bite-size chunks. Store in covered jars and serve with milk at breakfast, or use as a topping for desserts. Makes about 2 L (8 cups).

Healthful Buckwheat Patties

500 ml	water	2 cups
500 ml	buckwheat groats	2 cups
	1/2 onion, chopped	
	1 stalk celery, diced	
	1 large carrot, diced	
30 ml	butter *or* margarine	2 tbsp
	1 egg, slightly beaten	
5 ml	powdered sage	1 tsp
	salt to taste	
30 ml	sunflower seeds *or* almond slivers	2 tbsp

Bring water to a boil. Add buckwheat groats, reduce heat, and simmer 10 minutes. Set aside. Sauté onion, celery, and carrot in butter *or* margarine until soft. Add cooked groats and remaining ingredients, blending well. Cool and form into patties. In a lightly greased skillet, fry each side at moderate heat until golden brown. Makes about 1 dozen small patties.

Buttermilk–Buckwheat Pancakes, New Brunswick Style

375 ml	buckwheat flour	1 1/2 cups
125 ml	unbleached white flour	1/2 cup
2 ml	baking powder	1/2 tsp
2 ml	salt	1/2 tsp
5 ml	baking soda	1 tsp
800 ml	buttermilk	3 1/4 cups
10 ml	molasses	2 tsp
30 ml	vegetable oil	2 tbsp

Sift together all the dry ingredients and set aside. Combine buttermilk, molasses, and oil, and add to dry ingredients. Stir only until blended. Cook in the same manner as any pancakes, on a hot, greased griddle or frying pan. Serve piping hot with maple syrup. Makes about 3 dozen medium pancakes.

More for Your Interest

Buckwheat makes an excellent poultry feed, said to stimulate egg production. When ground and mixed with corn and oats, it is exceptionally good as a feed for dairy cows. It is often ploughed into the soil as an enricher, and is said to help smooth out rough ground and eradicate weeds. In most parts of Canada, Tartary buckwheat is better suited to the climate than common buckwheat because it is more resistant to frost and has a shorter growing season. It is a native of the mountainous regions of Nepal and southwestern China, where it has been cultivated for centuries.

The name buckwheat is a corruption of *buchweizen*, German for "beechnut", so called because the three-angled buckwheat seeds resemble beechnuts.

Giant Knotweeds

(Knotweed Family)

Other Names

Polygonum cuspidatum is known as Japanese knotweed, *P. sachalinense* as giant knotweed, or sachaline. Both are sometimes called American bamboo shoots.

How to Recognize

Knotweed is the common name of a number of species of the genus *Polygonum*, so named because of their thickened joints, resembling knots. Over sixty species of knotweeds grow on the North American continent, many being weedy. The Japanese knotweed and the giant knotweed, a closely related species, are the showiest, the most aggressive, and the most valuable as edible plants.

Both are Asiatic species and are not well known in many parts of Canada. However, both species (especially the Japanese knotweed) are quite familiar to those who live where they are found. The Japanese knotweed is a large, coarse perennial, with strong underground rhizomes and numerous freely branching stems that can attain a height of 2.5 m or more. They are reddish brown, wand-like, and hollow, with enlarged joints enclosed within thin, papery sheaths. During the winter, when their leaves are absent, they resemble bamboo shoots. The leaves are unusually large, and are oval-shaped to almost heart-shaped. Some are as

Polygonum cuspidatum

***Polygonum cuspidatum* Sieb. & Zucc. and *P. sachalinense* F. Schmidt *ex* Maxim.**
(Polygonaceae)

long as 20 cm. The whitish-green flowers grow profusely in branching clusters in the leaf axils. The seeds are small, smooth, and black. The giant knotweed resembles the Japanese knotweed but is even taller and coarser, with larger leaves.

Other knotweed species are also edible. The most common one, familiar to almost everyone, is the prostrate knotweed (*P. aviculare* L.), which often grows on very hard, trampled ground, along roadsides, and in waste places throughout North America.

Where to Find

Both giant knotweed species are handsome, but are too aggressive for many gardens. They have been planted as ornamentals in many localities throughout North America and are rapidly becoming weedy in neglected gardens, waste places, backyards, and along roadsides, particularly on the Pacific Coast, but also in eastern North America. Once you become familiar with them, you will find them easily, as they are really spectacular plants.

How to Use

The giant knotweeds are plants of high culinary value, used as root vegetables (the young underground rhizomes), cooked green vegetables (the young stems of up to 20 cm), and salad greens. The rhizomes can be eaten boiled or roasted. They are tasty, but some find them rather bitter. The best for eating are the young shoots, which should be collected before the leaves start to unfurl. They are delicious when cooked for three to five minutes in salted water and served hot with butter or a sauce, or cold with sour cream or mayonnaise. They are also good in soups, casseroles, and even desserts, where they can be used as a rhubarb substitute. These plants are easy to recognize, easy to prepare, and delicious to eat. Try some of our new recipes. Other *Polygonum* species can be used similarly.

Warning: Knotweed should be eaten in moderation, as there is a possibility that some species can cause photosensitization (hypersensitivity to light) in the same way that buckwheat can. However, this would occur only after eating large quantities and being exposed to intense sunlight for a long period of time.

Suggested Recipes

Canadian Knotweed Casserole

	12 young knotweed shoots, washed and cut into small pieces	
	salt, pepper to taste	
250 ml	cooked ham, cut into chunks	1 cup
125 ml	sour cream	1/2 cup
	2 medium tomatoes, sliced	
125 ml	breadcrumbs	1/2 cup
30 ml	melted butter	2 tbsp
50 ml	Parmesan cheese, grated	1/4 cup

Place knotweed shoots in a saucepan and cover with salted water. Bring to boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 4 minutes. Drain, add seasonings, and place in a well-greased casserole. Add ham to sour cream, and spoon over top. Add tomatoes as a next layer, cover with breadcrumbs mixed with melted butter, and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake at 200°C (400°F) for 30 minutes, or until golden brown. Serve hot as a main course. Serves 2–3.

Knotweed Sauce

1 L	knotweed shoots, washed	4 cups
500 ml	water	2 cups
500 ml	sugar	2 cups

Peel off outer skin of knotweed shoots and cut into segments. Combine water and sugar in a saucepan and heat until mixture reaches a rolling boil. Then reduce heat to simmer, add knotweed shoots, and cook until tender (5–10 minutes). Cool and serve with poultry as you would cranberry sauce.

Knotweed with Shortbread, Scottish Style

1 L	knotweed stems, washed	4 cups
500 ml	water	2 cups
500 ml	sugar	2 cups
	dash of nutmeg	
50 ml	brandy	1/4 cup

Peel off outer skin of knotweed stems and cut into segments. Combine water and sugar in a saucepan, and heat until mixture reaches a rolling boil. Then reduce heat to simmer, add knotweed stems, and cook until tender (5–10 minutes). Transfer stems to a serving dish, sprinkle with nutmeg, and let stand until cold. Add brandy just before serving. Serve as a spread with homemade shortbread.

Knotweed Prairie Pudding

750 ml	knotweed shoots, washed and sliced	3 cups
750 ml	liquid honey	3 cups
125 ml	butter	1/2 cup
750 ml	soft bread cubes	3 cups
	cinnamon and nutmeg to taste	

Combine all ingredients, except cinnamon and nutmeg, in a Dutch oven or heavy saucepan. Cover and cook at moderate heat for 30 minutes. Sprinkle with cinnamon and nutmeg before serving. Serve hot. Serves 6.

More for Your Interest

Japanese knotweed was first introduced to Europe from Japan in the middle of the nineteenth century. At that time, a Belgian botanist sampled it for its potential use as a vegetable and found the young stems, boiled and served with butter, to be at least as good as asparagus, and superior to chicory and even to French sorrel. The giant knotweed, introduced to England a few years later, is considered by some even better than the Japanese knotweed. Both should be eaten in moderation at first, however, as some find knotweeds, like their relative the rhubarb, to be slightly laxative.

Sheep Sorrel (and Garden Sorrel)

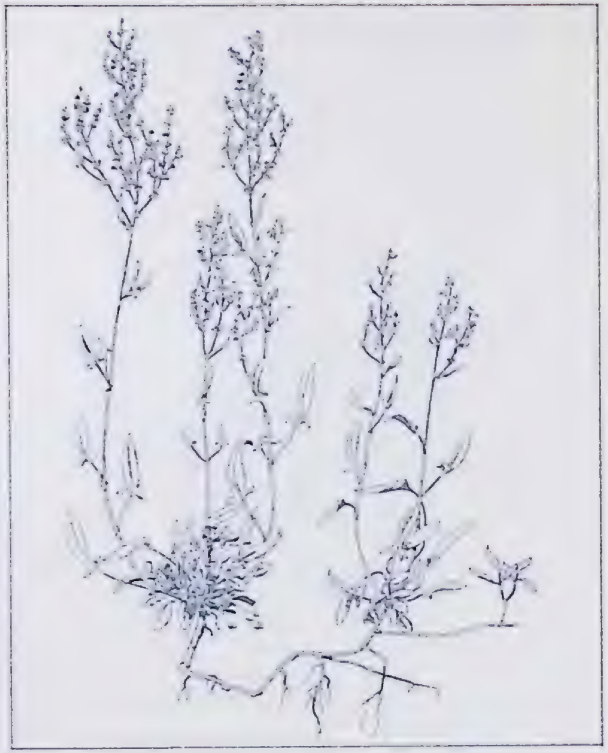
(Knotweed Family)

Other Names
Sourgrass, sorrel, field sorrel.

How to Recognize
Sheep sorrel is a low perennial, up to half a metre tall at the most, with slender, running rootstocks, the leaves and stems often having red pigment. The leaves, mainly basal, are rather narrow and usually somewhat lobed at the base, like an arrowhead. They have a smooth texture and are distinctly sour to the taste. The flowers, greenish to bright red, are small and are arranged in dense terminal clusters. The plants are one-sexed, either pollen-bearing (male) or seed-bearing (female). The blossoms of the female plants form tiny reddish-brown fruits.

To many gardeners and farmers, sheep sorrel is an enemy. Every year hours are spent in battling it. In most cases the weeds win out. We have a suggestion: instead of fighting the sorrel and losing money, not to mention your temper, why not simply get even by eating it right out of your garden. This will give you some satisfaction as well as a free lunch!

Occasionally, in various parts of Canada, especially Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and eastern Quebec, you will also find a related cultivated species, *Rumex acetosa* L., which often manages to escape and establish itself as a wild plant. This species, known as garden, or French, sorrel has much larger and juicier leaves and is commonly grown in



***Rumex acetosella* L.**
(Polygonaceae)

Europe. The two species have similar properties and both are edible; we shall therefore treat them alike without distinction.

Where to Find

Sheep sorrel was introduced from Europe and is now widely distributed in North America. You should find it without difficulty anywhere in Canada. Just take a walk along any country road or railway right-of-way. It seems to prefer dry, exposed waste places, and is particularly abundant and weedy in neglected cultivated places. It spreads rapidly by means of its slender rootstocks, and if it is not controlled it can soon take over an entire field.

How to Use

The leaves of the young plants are very refreshing when eaten raw, and so, if you are a nibbler, sheep sorrel is just the snack for you. It is delicious both in salads and as a potherb. Being rich in vitamin C, sorrel is also considered an antipyretic, diuretic, and antiscorbutic. Recipes for sorrel are found in many cookbooks, especially in Europe, where the garden sorrel is well known. You can use the leaves in many different ways—for making soups and sauces, as a seasoning for fish, pork, veal, lentils, rice, or potatoes, or mixed with other greens. Sorrel is commonly combined with such ingredients as eggs, bacon, milk, sour cream, and butter. Many people like to cook sorrel with milk, as the protein in milk removes the astringency of the leaves.

Suggested Recipes

Stuffed Eggs

	4 hard-boiled eggs	
30 ml	**fresh sorrel leaves, washed and finely chopped**	**2 tbsp**
	2 slices cooked bacon, crumbled	
30 ml	**sour cream *or* mayonnaise**	**2 tbsp**
	salt to taste	
	dash of cayenne pepper	

Cut eggs in half, lengthwise, and remove yolks. Mash yolks well, mix in sorrel leaves and bacon, and add just enough sour cream *or* mayonnaise to make the mixture creamy. Season and spoon into the egg-white halves. Serves 4 as an appetizer.

Maritime Green Sauce for Fish

30 ml	butter	2 tbsp
125 ml	sorrel leaves, washed and finely chopped	1/2 cup
250 ml	light cream (scalded)	1 cup

Melt butter and add sorrel leaves. Cook over moderate heat until soft. Slowly stir in cream. Serve over cod or other saltwater fish. This sauce can be thinned down with broth from the cooked fish, if desired.
Note: The cream is scalded to prevent it from being curdled by the acid in the sorrel.

Sorrel Cream Soup, Polish Style

125 ml	water	1/2 cup
1 L	sorrel leaves, washed	4 cups
30 ml	butter *or* margarine	2 tbsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
1 L	fresh milk	4 cups
250 ml	sour cream	1 cup
	4 hard-boiled eggs	

Bring water to a boil, add sorrel leaves, lower heat, cover, and simmer 20 minutes. Cool, drain, and press through a sieve or colander to make a purée. Add butter *or* margarine and seasonings. Pour milk into a saucepan and set over low heat. When it is scalded add sorrel purée. Simmer for 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and add sour cream gradually, blending well. Cut eggs in quarters and place a few pieces in each bowl of hot soup. Serves 4–6.

More for Your Interest

The term *sorrel* is applied to several unrelated plants containing an acid sap that gives them a sour flavour. Their acidity results from the presence of one of several organic acids, especially oxalic acid (*see* yellow wood-sorrels, *Oxalis* species, p. 128). In high concentrations, oxalic acid is harmful, and because of its presence, sorrel should not be eaten in excessive quantities. When eaten in moderation, however, the plant is not at all detrimental, and it adds a zesty flavour not found in ordinary greens. Sheep sorrel also contains tartaric acid and citric acid (vitamin C).

In former times, the European garden sorrel was used by herbalists as a cooling agent for fevers, an appetizer, a vermifuge, and a "cordial to the heart". The juice was gargled to relieve sore throats, and was rubbed on ringworm and sores to reduce itching and draw out the infection. It was also used in Europe as a rennet, to curdle milk.

Dock

(Knotweed Family)

Other Names
Rumex crispus is called curled dock or curly-leaved dock, yellow dock, or sour dock. Docks in general are sometimes called "wild rhubarb" or "Indian rhubarb", "Indian coffee", "Indian tobacco", or sorrel.

How to Recognize
The docks, especially curled dock, are well known and easy to identify as a group because of a number of distinctive characters. Most are erect, robust perennials with coarse-ribbed stems up to 1 m tall, growing from fleshy taproots. The leaves, usually bright green or sometimes red-tinged, grow to a considerable size in some species. They are largest at the base, becoming gradually reduced upwards. Leaves of curled dock are long and narrow, with crisp, wavy margins. (Those of some other docks are oval or arrowhead-shaped.) The veins are generally pronounced, giving the leaf surface a bumpy look. You will also notice that just above the point where the leafstalk joins the stem is a thin, papery sheath. The flowers are small, three-angled, and green or greenish purple, arranged in dense elongated clusters at the ends of the stems. You cannot miss dock plants in the autumn, when they are fruiting. At a distance, their masses of deep rusty-brown fruits resemble coarse coffee grounds, but if you examine them closely you will see that they are, like the flowers, three-angled, and that the 3 inner sepals form wing-like outgrowths that aid in wind dispersal of the seeds. These outgrowths are smooth-edged and somewhat heart-shaped in most species, but in some they are toothed or fringed.

Where to Find
A number of dock species occur in Canada. Curled dock is the most weedy and the most widespread. A native of Europe, it is naturalized in most parts of the world, and in Canada is common from coast to coast in gardens, fields, waste places, and along roadsides. Other docks occur in similar habitats; in some places you will find three or four different species in the same locality.

How to Use
Docks can be used as potherbs and in casseroles and salads. Some people find them too coarse to eat raw. Cooked as a green vegetable, they taste quite similar to asparagus. To us, dock is at its best when the young leaves, picked early in the spring, are steamed and served hot with butter or with breadcrumbs fried in butter. They are also pleasant served with strong cheese, sour cream, yoghurt, hollandaise sauce, lemon juice, or vinegar. You may find that the leaves taste a little bitter with age; we therefore suggest that you change the boiling water once or twice when cooking mature plants. You should not overcook dock, however, because its flavour will deteriorate and the vitamins and minerals will be lost. It is particularly rich in vitamin C and iron.

Try serving cooked dock with eggs, ham, bacon, or cheese as a luncheon dish. The results will be sure to please you. Did you know that you can even substitute it for rhubarb in your favourite pie recipes?

Warning: Although the docks are sometimes called wild rhubarb and are actually in the same family as rhubarb, remember that rhubarb leaves are poisonous and should *never* be eaten. The leaves and stems of our Canadian dock species are safe to eat in moderate quantities. However, because they contain a small amount of tannic acid, they may set off an allergic reaction in some individuals, though this is rather rare. Because a higher content of tannic acid is found in the roots, they should not be eaten nor should tea be made from them. In fact, the roots of a southwestern desert species called canaigre (*Rumex hymenosepalus* Torr.) contain as much as 35 per cent tannic acid and have long been used as a commercial tanning agent. Dock leaves also contain oxalic acid, as do rhubarb, sheep sorrel, and wood-sorrel. This compound is poisonous in high concentrations, but not in the amounts that would be consumed in a normal serving of dock.

Suggested Recipes

Vancouver Island Dock Chowder

	1 large onion, chopped	
30 ml	butter *or* margarine	2 tbsp
750 ml	young dock leaves, washed and shredded	3 cups
750 ml	fresh milk	3 cups
750 ml	fresh clams *or* oysters	3 cups
	2 potatoes, cooked, peeled, and cubed	
	salt, pepper to taste	
	parsley for garnish	

Brown onion in butter *or* margarine. Add dock leaves and stir for a minute or two until they are wilted. Add milk, clams *or* oysters, and potatoes. Cover and simmer over low heat for about 10 minutes, until the clams *or* oysters are tender. Add seasonings and garnish with parsley. Serve immediately. Serves 4.

Ontario Spring Casserole

50 ml	water	1/4 cup
500 ml	dock leaves, washed	2 cups
50 ml	butter *or* margarine	1/4 cup
15 ml	grated onion	1 tbsp
30 ml	flour	2 tbsp
250 ml	milk	1 cup
	salt, pepper to taste	
	3 hard-boiled eggs, sliced	
125 ml	buttered bread-crumbs	1/2 cup
125 ml	old Cheddar cheese, grated	1/2 cup

Bring water to a boil, add dock leaves, reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 3–5 minutes. Drain and set aside. Melt butter *or* margarine in a saucepan, add onion, and fry for 1 minute. Add flour and blend, and then slowly add milk. Add seasonings and cook until thickened. In a greased casserole arrange alternate layers of dock leaves and eggs. Pour sauce over top and sprinkle with breadcrumbs and cheese. Bake at 180°C (350°F) for 20–25 minutes. Serves 4.

Saskatchewan Dock Rolls, Ukrainian Style

250 ml	water	1 cup
	12 large basal dock leaves, washed	
500 ml	cooked rice	2 cups
	1 large onion, finely chopped	
250 g	chopped bacon	1/2 lb
250 g	Ukrainian *or* Polish sausage, sliced	1/2 lb
	salt, pepper to taste	
250 ml	tomato juice	1 cup
	sour cream (optional)	

Bring water to a boil, add dock leaves, reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 5–7 minutes or until very tender. Drain. Separate leaves, trim off large veins, and set aside. Combine rice, onion, bacon, and sausage. Season and spoon on the leaves. Roll in the same way as cabbage rolls. Place rolls in a casserole distributing them in two layers, folded sides down, and pour tomato juice over top. Bake at 150°C (300°F) for 1 1/2 hours. Serve hot with sour cream, if desired. Serves 3–4.

More for Your Interest

The term *Indian rhubarb* is employed by some of the coastal Indians of British Columbia, who used the leaves and stems of western dock (*R. occidentalis* S. Wats.) as a green vegetable and noticed its similarity to rhubarb after the latter was introduced. They also applied the boiled, mashed roots of western dock as a poultice for skin sores, boils, cuts, and scrapes.

Herbalists have traditionally recommended fresh or boiled dock root as a general tonic and as a poultice for minor skin sores. In the past, it was also said to clear impurities of the blood, and was prescribed for leprosy and elephantiasis.

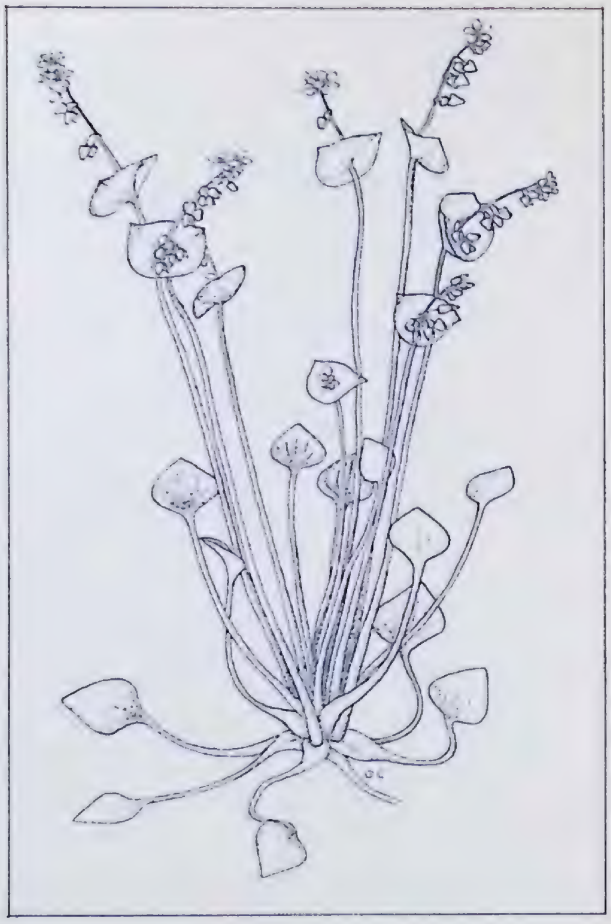
Miner's-Lettuce

(Purslane Family)

How to Recognize

This is a semi-succulent annual with numerous simple stems and many long-stalked basal leaves arising from a slender taproot. The plants vary in size from only a few centimetres to half a metre or so in height. The most characteristic feature of this species is the stem leaves, which are united into a single cup-shaped disc near the top of the stem. The discs may be up to 5 cm across on more robust plants. From the middle of each disc grows a compact cluster of small whitish flowers that eventually produce small, black, shiny, flattened seeds. In sunny, exposed places or in poor soil, the plants often take on a reddish or purplish tinge.

Another species, Siberian miner's-lettuce [*Montia sibirica* (L.) Howell], is similar to this one but is more robust, with larger flowers and pink-striped petals. The stem leaves are not united into discs, and the plants are not as weedy. The leaves have the same edible qualities as those of the ordinary miner's-lettuce.



***Montia perfoliata* (Donn) Howell**
(Portulacaceae)

Where to Find

Both miner's-lettuce and Siberian miner's-lettuce are native to western North America and Asia. They do not generally occur in Canada east of the Rocky Mountains, although miner's-lettuce has been introduced sporadically in eastern Canada, and both are now established in Europe. Miner's-lettuce prefers sandy soil in moist, somewhat shady locations. It is found fairly often in shaded woodlands, and is a frequent visitor of gardens, orchards, and waste places. Siberian miner's-lettuce grows in damp, shady forest habitats.

How to Use

The leaves and stems can be eaten raw, and make an excellent green that tastes like spinach when cooked. Be sure not to overcook this plant. The best method is to put it into salted boiling water for no longer than three minutes, drain, and serve immediately. For a change of diet we hope you try our simple but different recipes for preparing this fascinating plant.

Suggested Recipes

Miner's Supreme, French Style

50 ml	water	1/4 cup
500 ml	miner's-lettuce, washed and chopped	2 cups
50 ml	dry white wine	1/4 cup
10 ml	fresh lemon juice	2 tsp
	dash of Worcestershire sauce	
30 ml	butter	2 tbsp
	salt, pepper to taste	

Bring water to a boil, add miner's-lettuce, reduce heat, and simmer for 2–3 minutes. Drain and place in the bottom of a casserole. Add wine, lemon juice, and Worcestershire sauce. Dot with butter and seasonings. Bake at 180°C (350°F) for 20 minutes or until top starts to bubble. Serves 2.

Miner's-Lettuce with Parmesan

	2 slices French Bread	
	1 clove garlic	
500 ml	miner's-lettuce, washed, dried, and torn	2 cups
30 ml	olive oil	2 tbsp
30 ml	good-quality white wine	2 tbsp
15 ml	malt vinegar	1 tbsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
30 ml	grated Parmesan cheese	2 tbsp

Toast bread and rub with garlic. Cut toast into cubes and place in a salad bowl. Add miner's-lettuce, olive oil, wine, malt vinegar, and seasonings. Toss well and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Serves 2.

More for Your Interest

The common name, *miner's-lettuce*, refers to the use of the leaves by prospectors and miners as a salad green during the gold-rush days of California. The Indians and Spaniards in that area also ate the leaves, both raw and cooked. They were especially good for curing vitamin deficiencies. The Indians of Alaska and the native people of Siberia used Siberian miner's-lettuce in the same way; to this day it is an important source of vitamins in these far northern regions.

Purslane

(Purslane Family)

Other Names
Pusley, low pigweed.

How to Recognize
This is a fleshy annual plant arising from a short taproot. The stems are weak but freely branching, spreading over the ground to form dense mats. The leaves are small and paddle-shaped, smooth-textured, and stalkless. They grow alternately along the branches, forming rosettes at the tips, which seem to resemble carved, polished jade. The flowers are located in the leaf axils or at the stem tips. They are small and stemless, each with 5 small yellow petals that open only during sunny mornings. The fruits are small globular many-seeded capsules. The minute seeds, examined under a hand lens, are rounded or somewhat kidney-shaped, black and shiny, with a whitish scar at one end. Flowering and fruiting occur from early June until the first frost.

Where to Find
Purslane is a cosmopolitan weed, widely distributed across Canada and found in every province except perhaps Newfoundland. It is a common inhabitant of cultivated lands, orchards, waste places, gravel driveways, eroded slopes, and sandy bluffs. It has a wide tolerance to altitude, occurring from sea level to considerable elevations in the mountains.

How to Use
Purslane has been eaten and enjoyed in Persia and India for some 2,000 years. Today it is still commonly used as a potherb and salad green in Asia and in much of Europe. In Canada, farmers and gardeners are certainly acquainted with it but seldom appreciate its potential as a vegetable. This succulent plant is richer in iron than any other leafy vegetable except parsley; it contains approximately 3.5 mg of iron per 100 g (about 3 1/2 oz) of leaves. Another common weed, the amaranth (*Amaranthus retroflexus*), contains almost as much iron. Since these weeds are plentiful in Canada, one cannot help wondering why people do not take advantage of them. Purslane is also rich in vitamin A. In our opinion, it is one of the most delicious weedy vegetables; we hope you will agree.

Uncooked, purslane makes a very pleasant salad green by itself and an interesting addition to other salad vegetables. However, it is most commonly used as a potherb. There are many ways of cooking it, but the simplest, enjoyed by many, is to simmer the well-washed leaves (and stems if you wish) for three to five minutes in lightly salted water and serve with butter or margarine, crisp bacon, or any favourite sauce. Pickle lovers will find purslane very suitable for pickling and a good substitute for cucumber; simply use your favourite pickle recipe. The seeds of purslane can be ground into meal, and mixed in equal parts with flour to make bread or muffins; purslane seeds can also be boiled and eaten as porridge.

Suggested Recipes

Purslane Supreme

50 ml	water	1/4 cup
500 ml	fresh purslane leaves, washed	2 cups
30 ml	butter *or* margarine	2 tbsp
50 ml	dry white wine	1/4 cup
30 ml	lemon juice	2 tbsp
15 ml	Worcestershire sauce	1 tbsp
	salt, pepper to taste	

Bring water to a boil, add purslane leaves, reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 3–5 minutes. Drain and chop. Melt butter *or* margarine in a heavy skillet. Add purslane, wine, lemon juice, and Worcestershire sauce. Season and heat thoroughly. Serve hot. Serves 2.

Chicken Fricassee with Purslane

125 ml	water	1/2 cup
1 L	fresh purslane leaves, washed	4 cups
	1 frying chicken, cut into serving pieces	
50 ml	olive oil	1/4 cup
	1 clove garlic, minced	
	1 small can tomato sauce	
125 ml	dry white wine	1/2 cup
15 ml	lemon juice	1 tbsp

Bring water to a boil, add purslane leaves, reduce heat, cover and simmer for 3–5 minutes. Drain, chop, and set aside. In a large skillet brown chicken pieces in olive oil over low heat for 20 minutes. Add garlic, purslane, and tomato sauce, and cover. Poach slowly for 45 minutes or until tender. (Turn chicken halfway through cooking.) Add wine and lemon juice mixed together and cook for 2 more minutes. Serve very hot. Serves 4.

Purslane Casserole, Manitoba Style

500 ml	fresh purslane leaves, washed	2 cups
15 ml	butter *or* margarine (first amount)	1 tbsp
125 ml	uncooked wild rice	1/2 cup
250 g	thinly sliced smoked turkey	1/2 lb
30 ml	butter *or* margarine (second amount)	2 tbsp
30 ml	flour	2 tbsp
50 ml	light cream	1/4 cup
250 ml	chicken or turkey broth	1 cup
	salt to taste	
	Parmesan cheese	

Sauté purslane in butter *or* margarine (first amount) and set aside. Cook rice according to package directions and spread it in the bottom of a greased casserole. Layer turkey over top, and cover with purslane. In a saucepan melt butter *or* margarine (second amount), add flour, and allow to bubble. Add cream, broth, and salt, and whisk until thick and smooth. Pour sauce over purslane and bake at 180°C (350°F) for 45 minutes. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and serve hot. Serves 4.

Baked Eggs with Purslane

125 ml	water	1/2 cup
	dash of salt	
500 ml	purslane leaves, washed and chopped	2 cups
50 ml	butter	1/4 cup
50 ml	chopped onion	1/4 cup
	6 eggs	
50 ml	breadcrumbs	1/4 cup
125 ml	grated cheese	1/2 cup
50 ml	beer	1/4 cup

Bring water to a boil, add salt and purslane leaves, reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 3–5 minutes. Drain. Melt butter in a skillet, and sauté purslane and onion until onion is slightly browned. Place in a baking dish and break eggs over mixture, one beside the other, being careful not to break the yolks. Combine breadcrumbs with cheese and sprinkle over eggs. Pour a little beer over each egg. Bake at 180°C (350°F) until eggs are set but not hard, about 20–25 minutes. Serve immediately. Serves 3.

Fried Eggs with Purslane

125 ml	water	1/2 cup
500 ml	purslane leaves, washed and chopped	2 cups
50 ml	butter (first amount)	1/4 cup
5 ml	white wine vinegar	1 tsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
	4 eggs	
15 ml	butter (second amount)	1 tbsp

Bring water to a boil, add purslane leaves, reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 3–5 minutes. Drain. In a skillet, brown butter (first amount) and add purslane, wine vinegar, and seasonings. Fry for 5 minutes over moderate heat. Meanwhile, in another pan, fry eggs in butter (second amount). When eggs are cooked pour purslane mixture over them and serve at once. Serves 2–4.

More for Your Interest

Purslane is a troublesome weed, and the reason for its amazingly wide distribution is its incredibly large production of seeds. It has been estimated that during the growing season an average plant will produce more than 52,000 seeds. The production is a continuous process, and the seeds themselves have the ability to retain their viability for many years. Moreover, even an uprooted plant has the capacity to ripen its seeds.

In Central America and elsewhere, purslane is commonly sold in markets as a food for chickens, turkeys, and pigs. It is also considered a good remedy for worms in these animals.

Common Bedstraw

(Madder Family)

Other Names
Cleavers, goosegrass.

How to Recognize
This is a weak-stemmed but fast-growing annual that tends to scramble over other plants, and often attains a length of well over 1 m. The leaves are small, narrow, and tapering at both ends, growing in whorls, or circles, at intervals along the stem. The stems and leaf margins are lined with numerous tiny, hooked bristles, which make the plants rough and sticky to the touch and help them to cling to the surrounding vegetation. The flowers are tiny and white, in small, loose clusters towards the ends of the stems. Almost everyone is familiar with the fruits, even if the plant itself is seldom recognized. These small, rounded burs, growing in pairs, cling with infuriating tenacity to children's socks and pets' fur. Many an hour has been spent painstakingly removing them.

Several other species of bedstraw occur in Canada and may be used similarly, though they are generally not as weedy and persistent as this one.

Galium aparine L.
(Rubiaceae)

Where to Find

Common bedstraw is widespread in the northern hemisphere and occurs in a variety of habitats, including gardens and fields, over most of temperate North America. It is native to this continent and to Europe.

How to Use

The leaves and stems can be boiled as a potherb (before the hard, round fruits appear). The roughness, caused by tiny hooked barbs, disappears with cooking, and the greens are quite palatable. They are best mixed with other vegetables in soups and stews.

The fruits themselves make an amazingly good coffee substitute, thought by some to be better than any other in the north-temperate zone. Bedstraw is in the same family as true coffee, and the dried, roasted fruits have a similar flavour and aroma. You may find gathering them tedious work, but with today's coffee prices, you will find your bedstraw brew a real bargain.

Suggested Recipes

Cleavers Pottage

1 L	water	4 cups
5 ml	salt	1 tsp
1 kg	lamb shoulder, cut into chunks	2 lbs
30 ml	butter	2 tbsp
500 ml	bedstraw sprigs, washed	2 cups
15 ml	uncooked rolled oats	1 tbsp

In a saucepan place water, salt, and lamb. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for about 1 hour. Strain and remove any bones and fat, reserving broth. Place lean meat and broth back in the saucepan and set aside. Meanwhile, melt butter in a skillet and add bedstraw. Sauté gently for a few minutes. Add rolled oats to meat and broth, stir well, and then add the bedstraw. Simmer for 1 hour longer. Serve hot. Serves 4.

Note: "Women do usually make pottage of clevers with a little mutton and Otemeale, to cause lanknesse, and keep them from fatnesse" (Gerard 1975).

Bedstraw Coffee

Gather ripe fruits just as they are turning from green to brown. Roast in an oven at about 150°C (300°F) for 1 hour or so, until they are hard and crisp. Grind to powder in a blender, a coffee grinder, or with a rolling pin on a chopping board. Use about 25 ml (1½ tbsp) per 250 ml (1 cup) of water and percolate, or steep for about 5 minutes in boiling water and strain. The brew should be medium to dark brown in colour. Drink clear or with milk and sugar.

More for Your Interest

Dioscorides, the famous Roman physician who served under the Emperor Nero, reported in the first century A.D. that juice pressed out of the seeds, stalks, and leaves of bedstraw was used as a remedy for the bites of vipers and certain poisonous spiders. Pliny the Elder, a Roman naturalist and scholar, recorded earlier that the leaves were applied to wounds to stop the flow of blood. The stems and leaves have long been used in parts of Europe to strain straws, hair, and other foreign materials out of fresh milk. By some accounts, they are still used for this purpose in Sweden. The green fruits were used by lace-makers to make padded heads for their pins.

Stinging Nettle

(Nettle Family)

Other Names
Nettle, great nettle, devil's leaf, "Indian spinach".

How to Recognize
Stinging nettle is a well-known and all too easily identified plant. Many of us will never forget our first introduction to it and the red welts that followed! Strangely enough, this weed, which protects itself so efficiently, can be safely eaten when cooked. It is a coarse perennial herb that grows from long white rhizomes. The aerial stems are simple and erect, growing up to 2 m high. The opposite pairs of oblong to egg-shaped leaves are coarsely veined and sharply toothed. Both the stem and leaf surfaces are covered with bristly hairs containing an irritating oil that is rich in formic acid. This oil is released when the plant is touched, causing an intense stinging or burning sensation. The flowers are very small, green, and rather inconspicuous. They are located in clusters in the axils of the leaves. To some degree, they remind one of oak flowers.

Where to Find
Nettles require rather moist, fertile soil and they commonly grow in large patches along streams, rivers and roadsides, in vacant lots, and in gardens with wet, shady, neglected spots. They are common across North America, being native to this continent and to Eurasia.

How to Use
As a cooked green, nettles are eaten and enjoyed in many places in Europe and North America. They have a delicate flavour and pleasant texture, but they can easily be ruined by overcooking. They are also very nutritious, being a good source of vitamins A and C and some of the minerals as well. If the entire plants are to be used they should be gathered in spring while they are still young and tender. In summer, only the sprouting leaves can be used. A good crop of tender, blanched nettle shoots can be easily obtained during winter by bringing some of the fleshy underground stems into your basement in autumn and allowing them to sprout. We strongly advise you to wear rubber or leather gloves when gathering nettles, and to use a knife or scissors.

Suggested Recipes

Nettles à la Russe

375 ml	water	1 1/2 cups
2 ml	salt	1/2 tsp
250 ml	young nettle leaves, washed	1 cup
15 ml	butter	1 tbsp
30 ml	sour cream	2 tbsp

Bring water to a boil and add salt and nettle leaves. Boil for 2–3 minutes. Drain immediately. Melt butter in a skillet, add nettle leaves and sour cream, and stir for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and serve hot with fried eggs and bacon. Serves 2.

Nettle Bouillon

375 ml	water	1 1/2 cups
250 ml	nettle leaves, washed	1 cup
500 ml	beef broth	2 cups

Bring water to a boil and add nettle leaves. Boil for 1 minute only. Drain and rinse with cold water. Bring broth to a boil, reduce heat, and add nettle leaves. Simmer for 2 minutes. Serve with croutons. Serves 2–4.

Creamed Nettles, French Style

375 ml	water	1 1/2 cups
2 ml	salt	1/2 tsp
500 ml	nettle leaves, washed	2 cups
45 ml	butter *or* margarine	3 tbsp
15 ml	flour	1 tbsp
125 ml	cream	1/2 cup
1 ml	sugar	1/4 tsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
1 ml	nutmeg	1/4 tsp
30 ml	chopped, toasted almonds	2 tbsp

Bring water to a boil and add salt and nettle leaves. Boil for 2–3 minutes. Drain well and chop. Melt butter *or* margarine in a saucepan and add nettle leaves. Cook for 3 minutes. Stir in flour. Add cream and cook for an additional 5 minutes, until thickened. Add sugar and seasonings, and sprinkle almonds on top. Serves 4.

Nettle Soufflé

375 ml	water	1 1/2 cups
2 ml	salt	1/2 tsp
500 ml	nettle leaves, washed	2 cups
30 ml	melted butter	2 tbsp
	2 egg yolks, beaten	
250 ml	milk	1 cup
1 ml	sugar	1/4 tsp
	few drops garlic juice	
1 ml	paprika	1/4 tsp
	salt, pepper to taste	
10 ml	lemon juice	2 tsp
	2 egg whites, stiffly beaten	

Bring water to a boil and add salt and nettle leaves. Boil for 2–3 minutes. Drain well and chop. Combine all ingredients except the egg whites. Blend well. Carefully fold in egg whites. Place mixture in a greased casserole or soufflé dish and bake at 150°C (300°F) until firm, about 25 minutes. Serves 4.

Nettle Tea

Steep about 2 dozen washed medium-size nettle leaves *or* about half a dozen shoot tips in 1 L (4 cups) boiling water for one or more hours. Reheat just before serving.

More for Your Interest

Mature nettle stems are extremely tough and fibrous. They have been used in past centuries in the Old World, especially in Scotland and Norway, to make cloth, nets, cordage, and even paper. Properly prepared, nettle cloth can be even more durable than linen. American Indians, particularly on the Pacific Coast, used the fibre to make twine and fishnets.

A common folk remedy for rheumatism, arthritis, and other such ailments, among both Europeans and American Indians, was to score the affected limbs with nettles in a process known as urtication. The irritation caused by the nettles was said to relieve the deeper pain of the muscular affliction. Roman soldiers scoured their flesh with nettles to warm themselves in the cold. Perhaps this treatment also kept them from sleeping while on guard duty!

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Appendix: Some Weeds You Should Avoid

It is not within the scope of this book to discuss poisonous weeds in detail. For further information on these and other potentially harmful weeds and their toxic components we refer the reader to two excellent books on poisonous plants by John M. Kingsbury. Both are included in the Bibliography. The species discussed below are listed in alphabetical order of their scientific names.

Yarrow
(Achillea millefolium L.)
A common weed of field and pasture, in the aster, or composite, family (Asteraceae or Compositae). It contains strong-smelling volatile oils and has been widely used as a medicine by Indian peoples and Europeans, but it has a reputation of toxicity. In fact, according to one report, a calf died within 45 minutes of consuming a single yarrow plant.

Scarlet pimpernel
(Anagallis arvensis L.)
A low garden weed in the primrose family (Primulaceae), with small but conspicuous scarlet flowers. The leaves can cause irritation to the skin, and the foliage is suspected of poisoning livestock.

Dog fennel, or stinking mayweed
(Anthemis cotula L.)
A fine-leaved daisy-like garden and roadside weed in the aster family (Asteraceae or Compositae), often mistaken for its relative, camomile *(A. nobilis* L.). It contains an acrid substance that is irritating to mucous membranes.

Poison hemlock
(Conium maculatum L.)
A tall, branching, fine-leaved roadside and pasture weed in the celery family (Apiaceae or Umbelliferae), having many white umbrella-like flower heads, hollow stems, and a white taproot. The entire plant is extremely toxic. The ancient Greeks employed it to kill political prisoners, including Socrates. One mouthful of the root is enough to kill an adult. The roots are often mistaken for parsnips and the seeds for anise.

Wild morning-glory and field bindweed
(Convolvulus sepium L. and *C. arvensis* L.; also related species)
Climbing or trailing vines in the bindweed family (Convolvulaceae). Once established in a garden, the wild morning-glory, especially, is virtually impossible to eradicate. The entire plant contains a bitter, milky juice suspected of being a purgative and causing discomfort to livestock that eat it. The seeds have been found to contain toxic concentrations of nitrates.

Wild carrot
(Daucus carota L.)
The wild predecessor of the garden carrot, in the celery family (Apiaceae or Umbelliferae), is not in itself harmful, but it is so similar in appearance to poison hemlock that it should be avoided unless the identification is absolutely positive. Both plants have finely divided fern-like leaves, white umbrella-like flower heads, and long fleshy taproots, but wild carrot is shorter and the leaves and stems are distinctly hairy. In any case, the roots, unlike those of their cultivated counterparts, are extremely tough and virtually inedible.

Foxglove
(Digitalis purpurea L.)
A common garden plant in the figwort family (Scrophulariaceae), frequently escaping cultivation. The large, tubular, purple, pink, or white flowers are borne in a tall spike. The entire plant contains a number of poisonous compounds that affect the heart and nervous system. Digitalis, the medicine derived from this plant, is a well-known heart drug, but taken in uncontrolled dosages it can quickly cause death.

Common horsetail, or scouring rush
(Equisetum arvense L.)
A spore-bearing plant in the horsetail family (Equisetaceae). Its long, branching rhizomes can quickly invade cultivated ground, and are virtually impossible to eliminate. The white fertile shoots are edible, but the green branching vegetative shoots have caused poisoning in livestock.

Petty spurge
(Euphorbia peplus L.)
In the spurge family (Euphorbiaceae),this small leafy garden weed and other *Euphorbia* species are dangerous to humans and animals alike. When they are broken, the stems exude a milky sap that is severely irritating to the mouth and digestive tract.

St. John's wort
(Hypericum perforatum L. and related species)
Yellow-flowered weeds in the St. John's wort family (Hypericaceae), common along roadsides and in pastures, old fields, and rangelands. They are well known as livestock poisons, and have been responsible for the death of large numbers of sheep and cattle in some regions.

Wild sweet pea
(Lathyrus sativus L.)
A scrambling pink-to-purple-flowered vine in the pea family (Fabaceae or Leguminosae). The fruits are long, narrow pods. The "peas" are known to cause serious paralysis and are especially dangerous to children, who are inclined to eat them in play.

Opium poppy
(Papaver somniferum L.)
This beautiful flower, in the poppy family (Papaveraceae), is the source of morphine and heroin. It was formerly grown as a garden plant and is now found as an escape in many places, though it is unlawful to grow it because of its drug content. The entire plant, especially when it is young and green, contains heavy concentrations of morphine in the milky juice and is thus highly toxic.

Bracken fern
[*Pteridium aquilinum* (L.) Kuhn.]
This fern, in the fern family (Polypodiaceae), commonly invades pastures and cultivated ground. It is carcinogenic to several animal species and should not be consumed at any stage of its development, whether cooked or raw. Bracken should not be confused with the ostrich fern, which is safe, and whose "fiddlehead" is commonly available commercially.

Creeping buttercup and tall buttercup
(Ranunculus repens L. and *R. acris* L.)
In the buttercup family (Ranunculaceae), these weedy species yield a highly irritating oil that causes soreness and blistering when rubbed on the skin, or inflammation of the tissues of the mouth, throat and digestive tract when the leaves are swallowed.

Poison ivy
(Rhus radicans L.)
Perhaps the best known of all poisonous weeds, this low shrubby plant of the sumac family (Anacardiaceae) is native to North America. It often invades pasturelands and waste places. The leaves are shiny and three-parted. The entire plant contains a colourless or milky toxin that can cause severe skin irritation on contact. This substance can be transported on clothing or tools that have touched broken parts of the plant and even in the smoke of burning stems.

Bouncing bet and cow cockle
(*Saponaria officinalis* L. and *S. vaccaria* L.)
These common weeds of waste places and cultivated fields are in the pink family (Caryophyllaceae). They contain large quantities of a foaming chemical, saponin, and have a reputation for potential toxicity, though they are distasteful to animals and therefore seldom eaten.

Common groundsel
(*Senecio vulgaris* L.)
In the aster family (Asteraceae or Compositae), this common annual garden weed has not been found to be poisonous in North America, but many other *Senecio* species on this continent are known to be toxic to livestock, as they contain poisonous alkaloid compounds.

Climbing nightshade and black nightshade
(*Solanum dulcamara* L. and *S. nigrum* L.)
These two weedy plants—the first (also called bittersweet) a climbing vine of wet places, the second a short herb of gardens and waste places—are in the same family as the potato and tomato, the nightshade family (Solanaceae). As with these important crop plants, the foliage of the nightshades contains a highly toxic alkaloid, known to cause sickness and death of animals and humans. The ripe fruits of some varieties are edible, but in all cases the green fruits should be avoided.

Tansy
(*Tanacetum vulgare* L.)
An aromatic European ornamental and medicinal herb in the aster family (Asteraceae or Compositae). It has been widely prescribed as a herbal cure for a wide variety of ailments, but it has occasionally caused illness and even death when improperly administered.

Vetches
(*Vicia sativa* L. and other *Vicia* species)
Common weedy vines in the pea family (Fabaceae or Leguminosae), with small pea-like fruiting pods, these plants have occasionally been reported to produce disease or loss of livestock, especially when the seeds are ingested.

Glossary

Alternate
Borne singly at successive nodes.

Annual
A plant that lives only one year or season.

Anther
The part of a stamen containing the pollen.

Awn
A slender, usually terminal bristle.

Axil
The angle formed by a leaf or branch with the stem.

Axis
The central line of any organ or support of a group of organs, such as a stem.

Basal
Pertaining to the base or lower part of a plant.

Biennial
A plant that lives only two years; flowers are usually produced only in the second year.

Blade
The expanded, usually flat portion of a leaf.

Bract
A modified leaf, either small and scale-like (as around a thistle flower head) or large and petal-like (as on a flowering dogwood flower head).

Calyx
The outer of two series of floral leaves or bracts.

Capsule
A dry dehiscent fruit composed of more than one carpel.

Carpel
A single pistil or one unit of a composite pistil.

Cauline
Borne along the stem.

Clasping
Entwined about or growing very close to something, for example the stem of a plant.

Composite
Composed of several to many individual flowers borne in one compact head.

Compound
Composed of two or more parts.

Corolla
The inner of two series of floral leaves or bracts; petals considered collectively.

Culm
The aerial stem of grasses or grass-like plants.

Dehiscent
Splitting open at maturity by means of slits or valves.

Dicotyledon
A large group of flowering plants characterized by embryos with two seed leaves (cotyledons), net-veined leaves, and flower parts in fours or fives (as opposed to monocotyledons).

Elliptic
Oval in outline.

Gland
A secreting surface or structure, often a hair-shaped appendage.

Glandular
Having glands.

Glume
One of a pair of bracts, found at the base of a grass spikelet, that do not subtend flowers.

Head
A dense cluster of sessile or nearly sessile flowers or fruits on a very short axis or receptacle.

Inflorescence
A flower cluster of a plant or the arrangement of the flowers on the axis.

Lanceolate
Considerably longer than broad, tapering upwards from the middle or below; lance-shaped.

Latex
A milky juice exuded by some plants when they are broken or injured.

Leaflet
An ultimate unit of a compound leaf.

Lemma
One of the pair of bracts that generally subtend the individual flowers in grass spikelets.

Lobed
Having major divisions extending about halfway to the base or centre, for example as in maple or oak leaves.

Monocotyledon
A large group of flowering plants characterized by embryos with a single seed leaf (cotyledon), parallel-veined leaves, and flower parts in threes (as opposed to dicotyledons).

Node
The place upon a stem that normally bears a leaf, a pair of opposite leaves, or a whorl of leaves.

Opposite
Growing directly across from each other at the same node (in reference to leaves).

Palmate
Resembling a hand with the fingers spread (in reference to a leaf).

Pedicel
The support of a single flower.

Peduncle
The primary flower stalk supporting either a cluster or a solitary flower.

Perennial
A plant that lives more than two years.

Petal
One of the divisions of the corolla of a flower.

Petiole
A leafstalk.

Pinnately compound
A compound leaf with leaflets on either side of a central axis in a feather-like arrangement, for example the leaf of a walnut or elderberry.

Pistil
The female organ of a flower, composed of one or more carpels.

Potherb
A plant whose leaves or stems are cooked for use as greens.

Raceme
An elongated inflorescence, with each flower on a stalk.

Ray flower
Petal-like showy flower at the margin of the disc of a composite flower, such as a sunflower or daisy.

Rhizome
An underground stem or rootstock: distinguished from a true root by the presence of nodes, buds, or scale-like leaves.

Rootcrown
The top part of a taproot, from which the leaves grow.

Rootstock
A rhizome.

Rosette
A cluster of leaves, usually at the base of a plant.

Sepal
One of the modified leaves of a calyx.

Sessile
Not stalked: sitting.

Species
The fundamental unit in the classification of plants and animals.

Spike
An elongated inflorescence, with each flower attached directly to the central stalk.

Stamen
A male, or pollen-bearing, organ of a flower.

Taproot
A main root, growing vertically downward, from which smaller branch roots grow out, for example a carrot.

Terminal
Growing at the end of a stem or branch.

Tuber
A thickened and short underground stem, for example a potato.

Umbelliferous
Plants in the celery family (Apiaceae or Umbelliferae).

Waste places
Sites that have been disturbed by man and left without cultivation.

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